WHEN THE SONG OF THE LORD BEGAN

W. E. BIEDERWOLF

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WHEN THE SONG OF THE LORD BEGAN

AND OTHER SERMONS

By
WILLIAM EDWARD BIEDERWOLF

Author of *"Later Evangelistic Sermons," "They Have Taken Away My Lord," "What About So-Called Christian Evolution?"*, etc.

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FOREWORD

YES, it is true that a good many people have asked at the close of the service if the sermon preached was in print. This has had something to do with the appearance of these eleven sermons in this form. But even more than this is the writer's conviction that if the spoken message has been helpful to some, the printed form will reach in a helpful way many others, the number of which, if it please God, may be very great.

The sermons have been prepared for those of us who are conscious of a serious lack in our own Christian experience, and the need of a power far greater than our own if we are to realize for ourselves what we are accustomed to call the "Victorious Life." Dear child of God, as you read, I know longings will rise up, and I can hear you saying deep within your own soul as you go along through the following pages, "I would give anything to have an experience like that for myself." It may be yours.

I visited recently the Osage Indians in Oklahoma at the time of the annual celebration of their old-time war dance. A dozen red-skins were tom-tom-ing on a single big drum while one hundred and seventy-five men, women, and children, arrayed in the most elaborate costumes, with feathers and bells, "stomped" about in rhythmic motion to the beating of the drum and the weird intonations that came from what the Indians doubtless thought the "tuneful tongues" of the drummers as they drummed. The native charm was there, majestic far above the gloss of art. The scene I shall never forget.

Among the dancers was one magnificent figure in gorgeous array, but with a quiet, thoughtful face. He was a graduate of one of our great state universities and had been a professor of psychology in the same institution. He had been a foot-ball star, and later the coach of the team. He had married a white girl and became the father of two fine little children. But leaving them, he had married an Osage Indian girl, and as I saw him dancing about in gala attire among his Indian friends and companions of earlier days his face was written all over with contentment and supreme happiness.

The "call of the wild" had been too much for him; the old Indian nature within began to assert itself, and the pull of the old life was too strong for him. The charm of a purer civilization could not hold him; he forsook his wife and his children; he forgot his God and his duty, and he went back —back to the forest and the field; back to the music of the Indian drum; back to the old life again!

Is that you?

Has the house of God been losing its attraction for you?

Has the world been beckoning to you with its bewitching smile?

Do you find yourself alarmingly indifferent to the call of your devotional life?

Must you confess to a lack of power in prayer?

Have you been falling in the presence of some seemingly irresistible appeal of the flesh?

Has the pull of the old life been too strong for you, and have you gone back?

The message of this book is that there is a remedy for all this. It speaks not only of pardon but faithfully tries to point to the pathway of purity, of peace, and of power in which we need so much to set our feet. And as you read may the Holy Spirit show you again, or show you now if He has never shown you before, that there is only one royal road to victory and that is the road that leads by the way

of the altar and the Cross, where the fire falls and the nails are driven; the fire that must utterly consume and the nails that must utterly crucify the life that is centered in self.

"O the bitter pain and sorrow,
That a time could ever be,
When I proudly said to Jesus,
'All of self and none of Thee.'

"Yet He found me, I beheld Him,
Bleeding on the accursed tree,
And my wistful heart said faintly,
'Some of self and some of Thee.'

"Day by day His tender mercies,
Healing, helping, full, and free,
Brought me lower, while I whispered,
'Less of self and more of Thee.'

"Higher than the highest heavens,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
'Lord, Thy love at last hath conquered,
None of self and all of Thee'."

Theodor Monod.

WILLIAM EDWARD BIEDERWOLF.

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I

WHEN THE SONG OF THE LORD BEGAN

"And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also."—2 Chron. 29:27.

FOR sixteen years there had been no song in the Temple of Israel. And then one day something very wonderful took place. Early in the morning the king and the rulers of the city went up to the temple; and the Levites came with their harps, and the priests were there with their trumpets, and there was a great chorus of trained singers. And suddenly—it says, "When the burnt offering began"—the trumpets blew, and the harpers began to thrum with mighty volume on their strings and then, like the sound of many waters, came the voices of the temple singers, and the house of the Lord was filled with hallelujah music somewhat like that, no doubt, which we are told is one day to fill the courts of heaven.

And so the sixteen years of songless time came to an end. The Israelites were accustomed to song. They went into every battle with song. They celebrated every victory with song, and whenever the Lord was with them they were singing all the time, and it must have been a sad, long sixteen years when there was no song in Israel's heart, and no note of praise to God on their lips.

Billy Bray used to say that if they should shut him up in a barrel he would shout "Glory" through the bung-hole. The Lord expects His people to sing and be glad. Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." It is not

only expected of a Christian that he should be happy, but it is the genius of the religion of Jesus to make him that way. This is as natural to real, genuine religion as the bloom to a maiden's cheek when she is in good health.

Dr. A. J. Gordon one day met an old man going up to the house of God, and he said to him:

"My aged friend, why should an old man be so merry and cheerful?"

"All are not," said he.

"Well, then, why should you be so merry?"

"Because I belong to the Lord."

"And are none others happy at your time of life?"

"No, not one," said the old man; and his form straightened into the stature of his younger days, and something of inspiration glowed upon his countenance. "Listen, please, to the truth from one who knows; then wing it around the world, and no man of threescore and ten will be found to gainsay it: "The Devil has no happy old men!"

It is religion, and religion alone, that makes people happy. We said it before and we say it again. It is the genius of the thing to do it, and if you are not always rejoicing in the Lord I think I can tell you the reason why.

Now, let us see why Israel lost her song. Look at the 28th chapter and you will find that Ahaz, the king, had no use for the worship of God so he drove out of the temple the singers and the priests. He cut in pieces the gold and silver vessels; he hewed down the altars and put out the lights and locked the doors and the house of God was filled with dust and dirt and became the abode of sparrows and the birds of the air that built their nests in its neglected courts.

For sixteen years this lasted, and the judgment of God fell upon the nation. It always does under such circumstances.

Show me the nations of the world that have despised God and lived in luxury and self-indulgence, and every time

you will find a nation that has gone down in the rot and ruin of its own godless glory. Look at Babylon, and Carthage, and Ninevah and Rome. Look at Greece. Hers was the most beautiful civilization of the world. She was master of philosophy. She gave to the world much of its finest in art and literature. But where is ancient Greece now? She is nothing but a memory. Why? It is because she gave herself over to luxury and self-indulgence and the heart of the nation became flabby. She chased every new teaching that came her way, and she lost her character, and she went down as other such nations have gone down.

I tremble sometimes as I think of my own nation. We boast that we are the greatest nation in the world. Perhaps we can say it truly. But let us have a care, "Lest we forget." The amazing thing to me is that so many, who have good sense in many other ways, think we can get along without the house of God. But to throw up skyscraping buildings, to create navies and standing armies, and to close temple doors is the surest way to defeat the nation's greatest need."

The bankers and the business men of this country pay Roger Babson a million dollars a year to tell them, from month to month, just what is the best thing for business. And he is worth it. But under the circumstances I think I would take his advice or stop his "salary." He gives us some startling figures about the decline in the value of real estate if the churches should be closed and the preachers go out of business, and then he says, "For the sake of business, for our own sakes, for our children's sakes, for the nation's sake, let us business men get behind the churches and their preachers. The safety of all we have is due to the churches. By all that we hold dear, let us from this very day give more time, more money and thought to the churches of our city, for upon these the value of all we own ultimately depends." And yet the only way you can get some men inside the house of God is to wait till they are dead and carry them in for the

funeral. But it doesn't seem right to take advantage of a dead man like that when you couldn't drag him inside while alive, with a twenty-mule borax team. And one of the big reasons why some men don't go to church is because they haven't business sense enough to do it.

It was closing the doors of the house of the Lord, and forgetting God that robbed Israel of her song. And if the song has gone out of your life, it is exactly for the same reason—the temple of your manhood and your womanhood has been closed against its rightful Lord. Of course, you didn't close the door with a slam. You would not, of course, be rude to your Lord. You just neglected to read your Bible; prayer became too much of a task; the house of God began to lose its attraction, and the old pleasures began to fascinate you, and without actually saying, "These be your god, O Israel," you gave yourself to them and closed the door of your life against your God.

And no wonder the song is gone and conscience points its accusing finger in your face.

How can we get the song back? And how can we get the Christian experience that is buoyant and free? Well, look at the verse out of which we have taken our text. It says, "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also." The time came when King Ahaz had to die. He had been so vicious and wicked that the people loathed him; they refused him a sepulchre among the kings of Israel, so he had to sleep in a dishonored grave.

And Hezekiah, his son, became king. He was one of the noblest princes that ever adorned the throne of David. He had everything against him on his father's side. But no one has to be bad because he has been brought up under bad influences. And we have every reason to believe that Abijah, his mother, the daughter of Zechariah, was a good woman; and no doubt in the midst of the profligacy and idolatry of her wicked husband's reign she took the infant lad under her

special control and inspired him for the noble part he was to play when he took the throne of his father.

Next to His own Son, the best gift God ever gave to this world is a good, sensible, praying, Christian mother. If we had more mothers like that and fewer of the bepowdered fashion plates we have to-day we would find more Hezekiahs among the youth of the land.

The most useless thing in this world is a woman who lives merely for dress and social function. I saw a woman on the train a short while ago with her face all benameled, her hair all peroxided and artificially colored, and bobbed at that, and I'll miss my guess if she was a day under eighty. I saw her in the face. You know sometimes in these days when you look from the rear you can't tell whether she is a daughter of fourteen or a Daughter of the Revolution. But I was looking at a corpse; for the Word of God says such women are dead, even while they think they are finding life. Lionel Fletcher said, at the Winona Bible Conference last year, "There is nothing more beautiful than the beauty of old age when it is entered upon gracefully and in the Spirit of Christ, but there is nothing more ghastly than a painted-up human being, trying to make the world believe she is young—trying to dodge her old age."

And then he told us about his own dear old mother. She had seven boys and she never went to bed until all were in at night. Each night she prayed with them when they were young. She used to go round the circle and put her hand on each head as she prayed. He said she never prayed for them to be rich, or to be clever, but she used to pray, "O God, make this boy a preacher of the Gospel." So she prayed with each of her sons and all seven of them became preachers. A million times better that than to forget the building of character, and to reach out after social function, and wealth, and pleasure, and the things this world can give you.

The first thing Hezekiah did when he came to the throne was to open the doors of the temple and start again the worship of Jehovah. He brought the priests and the Levites together and told them first to sanctify themselves, for they had been chosen to stand before the Lord and to minister unto the people. And then he told them to cleanse the temple, to carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place, and to restore the vessels of the Lord. And when this was done, he commanded the burnt offering to be made upon the altar. "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also," and "they sang praises with gladness and they bowed their heads and worshipped."

Listen! all too much the song has died out of the church of to-day. Some things have crept in and others have been crowded out and the change has been robbing the church of the song that ought to be in her heart. I have sat in the presence of old, white-haired patriarchs of the church and have heard them tell of the times of refreshing they used to have, and how the church was filled with the song of the Lord, and I thought of two things.

I know, first, that we have allowed the dust and the dirt and the cobwebs of the world to accumulate—that the spirit of the world has so entrenched itself in the very heart of the church that hosts of members have been transformed into mere worldlings, if ever they knew the change of the regenerating grace of God before they entered the church. And the church has had to go on crutches, and no wonder she can't stand erect and be the power in the world God meant her to be.

The other thing is the preaching. Not the style of the preaching—for that must change—but the content of the message preached. Let a man preach to-day the simon-pure, unadulterated, old-fashioned gospel "once for all delivered unto the saints" and a lot of people who seem to think the process of evolution has carried them a few decades in ad-

vance of the rest of us will get up and tell us we are out of date. Well, it is better a thousand times to be out of date than out of harmony with the abiding and unchanging Word of the living God.

There are preachers who just must be "modern" — if nothing else. They seem to think it puts them in a class with the "intellectuals." They call the rest of us "ignorant" and "unsophisticated," "reactionaries," "medievalists," and "obscurantists," and with charitable tolerance they say, "Oh, well, what can you expect?" As if wisdom is to die with the so-called "Modernist"! They remind me of the Three Tailors of Tooley Street, who petitioned the English Parliament, and began by saying, "We, the people of England."

But how can the church expect to have the power of apostolic days and to go forth bright as the sun and terrible as an army with banners; how can she expect to have seasons of refreshing from on high and to have the song of the Lord in her heart as long as so many of our ministers are preaching from a mutilated Bible, and are contending for the Christ-dishonoring teaching of a brute ancestry for one who bears the image of God, and seek to remove the Virgin Birth and the supernatural in general from the Revelation of God, as we find it in the Bible?

Hezekiah told the priests to restore the vessels of the temple, which the wicked King Ahaz had carried away. And there are some things that ought to be restored to the house of God to-day. Let the Bible come back and let men preach the truth as it is written, and not quibble about it. Let us understand that Jesus *was* conceived by the Holy Ghost; that He *was* God manifest in the flesh; that He *did* take our place on the cross to keep us out of hell; that His body *was* raised as ours shall be raised; that He *did* ascend with His resurrection body into heaven and that with this same body He *is* going one day to return. And as we restore these things, let us make once more the sin offering for our transgressions, and

then the burnt offering, for that always comes next, and with it surrender to the will of God (for that is what it means), and I believe with all my soul that the times of refreshing will come and the revival for which we have so long prayed will break upon us like a deluge from the hills, and the song of the Lord will begin in the church. "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also."

And now for the individual and the meaning of the text for him.

1. *The temple was opened.* Do we need to be reminded again that every child of God is a temple of the Holy Ghost? And if the song is gone are you willing to open up your life to the will of God again to-day to get it back?

Have you been singing, "Where is the joy which once I knew, when first I found the Lord?" Listen! I will tell you where it is. It is back there, just where you left it. It is back there where you forsook the house of God for the movies on prayer meeting night—back there where you commenced to gossip and lie about your neighbor—back there where you decided to play golf and do altogether as you pleased on the Lord's Day—back there where you took up the cards and the dance and the wine glass. It is back there where you said "Good-bye" to God. Go back and get right at that point, and the song of the Lord will begin again in your soul.

2. *And then they cleansed the temple.* You would not worship in a temple like the one that Hezekiah found, mouldy and dirty and festooned with dusty cobwebs. And so the Holy Spirit must have a clean temple in which to dwell. It may be just one thing—and what seems to you a small thing—but it is that thing that is taking the song of the Lord out of your life and causing you to go powerless in the presence of men.

I have heard Dr. F. B. Meyer tell of the night when he knelt by his bed and resolved that he would not sleep until

he had given himself completely to God. And he said, "It seemed as though Jesus was by my side, and as if I took from my pocket a large bunch of keys, and from that bunch I took one tiny key, which I kept, and then offered Jesus the bunch and said, 'Here are the keys of my life!' And He looked at me sadly and said, 'Are they all here?' 'All but one tiny one,' I said. 'It belongs to a small cupboard and really it cannot amount to anything.'

"And He said, 'If you cannot trust me with everything, you cannot trust me with anything.' "

And said Dr. Meyer, "It seemed as though I could not give it up, but I said, 'Lord, I am willing to have You come and take it.' " And said he, "It was as I expected; He came and, as it were, opened the fingers of my hand and took the key from me. Then He went straight to that cupboard, unlocked and opened it, and saw there a thing that I loved, but a thing that was terrible and hideous. And he said, 'This, too, must go out; you must never go this way again.' " And said Dr. Meyer, "I yielded; and instantly I began to hate the thing, and I said, 'O God, from this night do with my life as Thou wilt.' " And the song of the Lord began, and there came to him peace and power, and you know what the Lord has done through this mighty man of God.

3. *And then they restored the holy vessels that had been taken away.* And there are things that need to be restored if the song of the Lord is to begin.

What about the place of this book, the Bible, in your life? If it lies dusty on the shelf, then no wonder the life is barren, because the spirit has been starved. But if you can say with the prophet, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them," you can also say with him, "And Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

What about prayer? That is another vessel that needs to be restored. You allowed the Devil to persuade you that you could get along with a little less bending of the knees, because

God understands your spirit anyhow; and you know the price you've paid because of your neglect.

And then the means of grace in the house of God. How careless about church attendance some of us have been. Certainly all these things must be restored if we expect the song of the Lord to begin.

4. *And then one last thing was done.* It was the offering; the sin offering, and the burnt offering. The sin offering always came first and then the burnt offering followed. It was called the burnt offering because the victim was entirely consumed—burnt up.

And what have I to do with the sin offering in this day? Nothing but to put my hand in God's, and let Him lead me out to a "green hill far away," and see One hanging there who made Himself a perpetual sin offering on my behalf. And, realizing that the glorious Lamb of God who redeemed my life from destruction in the first place can redeem it from the mistakes and the failure I have made of it since, what is there left for me to do, as I stand there "lost in wonder, love and praise," but to cry,

> "Were the whole realm of nature mine,
> That were a tribute far too small;
> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my life, my soul, my all!"

And then, forgetting all but the face of the slain Lamb, make ready the altar for the burnt offering and, stretching myself upon it, ask God to send the fire and consume it utterly.

We have been told by a missionary that among the devotees of Buddha a woman came forward in the line and threw a large amount of gold and silver into the chest. Then, leaving the line, she went to one side, and after muttering over the precepts of her faith she elbowed her way back and threw in her earrings and bracelets and anklets. And then again she came and threw in a shawl of the finest cashmere,

and worth hundreds of dollars. And then once more she came, but the priest protested, and told her to go away and not to give any more, and she said, "I have nothing more to give but myself," and with that she drew a poniard and stabbed herself with it, and fell dead over the other gifts.

God does not ask of us a thing like this, but it is a spirit like this that not only makes us sing, but keeps us singing all the time with the song of the Lord in our hearts.

There is a verse at the end of the chapter which says, "The thing was done suddenly." O child of God, are you not tired to-night—tired of the half-hearted, faltering, hungry life you've lived, and about worn out with the drudgery of past years? Won't you then decide suddenly to make your burnt offering to-night? It isn't the world that makes you sing. Poor Slivers! the greatest fun-maker in the world, the highest paid circus clown the world has ever known, with plenty of money, and with the finest of health, turned on the gas the other night and went out into eternity with a heart that didn't know how to laugh. Oh, no, it isn't the world that makes you sing. It is the full, rich life that the burnt offering brings—the life of surrender to the will of God. Did you say you were weary of it all; weary of the empty, disappointing experience of the past? Then listen:

> "O Love that will not let me go;
> I rest my weary soul in Thee;
> I give thee back the life I owe,
> That in Thine ocean depths its flow,
> May richer, fuller be."

"And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also."

II

THE HOLE IN THE WALL

"And when I looked, behold a hole in the wall."—Ezekiel 8:7.

THE other day I came across a few verses and this is one of them:

> "I have to live with myself, and so
> I want to be fit for myself to know;
> I want to be able as the days go by,
> Always to look myself straight in the eye:
> I don't want to stand, with the setting sun,
> And hate myself for the things I've done."

First let me tell you a story:

Among the distinguished architects celebrated in ancient Greek mythology were the two brothers Trophonius and Agamedes. They were employed by King Hyrieus to build for him a treasury house. But as they built they were possessed of a passion for the wealth they knew the treasury would contain, and in the wall of the building they placed a stone in such a manner that it could be removed and then again put back in place.

So adroitly and with such rare skill was the thing accomplished that none could detect the secret stone, and by this means from time to time Trophonius and Agamedes purloined the treasure of the king. King Hyrieus was amazed, for though his locks and his seals were untouched his wealth was continually diminished.

How like this it is with the life of many a child of God. It is a life well-guarded and victorious at every other point, but there is one place at which its spiritual vitality is tapped

and where its treasury of divine glory, of virtue, and of spiritual worth in general is being drained and wasted. Strong and invulnerable at every other point, yet here disheartening defeat is continually met.

But there is one great difference. King Hyrieus did not know the source of his embarrassment and the loss that came to him. But in your life and mine such is not the case. The evil thing that saps our strength, robs us of our glory and our joy, and threatens the very life of the soul itself, is known by at least two persons, God and yourself, God and myself. It is that besetting sin, perhaps a secret one which, unless we meet it in mortal combat and "by His wonderful power, by His grace every hour" remorselessly ride it down to death, will prove our undoing and involve us at last in spiritual bankruptcy more awful than the loss of the world's whole treasure.

> "I digged a grave and laid within
> Its secret depths one secret sin;
> I closed the grave and know full well
> That day I shut myself in hell."

There is a better way than that.

Now for the text:

"Son of man," said the Lord to Ezekiel while in vision, "hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery?"

It's just here, isn't it, that most of us fail? The ungodly man who neither knows nor fears God does not hesitate to sin in the open save only as he fears social consequences. But I take it that most of us are able to contemplate our past, at least since the day of our Christian profession, with some considerable satisfaction with respect to sinning of a sort like that.

You never murdered a man in cold blood for a good many reasons, not the least of which is that you never cared to do

so. The same thing is true of robbing a bank vault, of gambling, of drunkenness, of profanity, and other heinous things that could be mentioned, and to which the godless of the world give themselves.

But how is it in the chamber of our imagery? If your memory became a painter and used the walls of that chamber for a canvas! In fact the memory paints there, whether we will or no. In colors bright or dark, in lineaments of joy or shame, she paints every struggle of the soul—every thought, every desire, every purpose of the heart. All are there, and I am afraid that not many of us would care to have them brought before eyes other than our own.

And yet we must not forget that such a day is coming. We enter the chamber of imagery to-day for reflection, and I trust for repentance and improvement; but if not for this, the day is coming when we must enter it for judgment. In that hour the painter will touch the scenes up all afresh—for memory will be there—and in the midst of the awful congregation of the risen dead we shall pass through this hall of imagery when both memory and conscience will affirm the righteous judgment of God. And for that day, when the strong shall bow and the devout shall tremble, may we in mercy be prepared.

It was a series of weird visions that came to Ezekiel, out of which he was to let the people know that judgment must begin at the house of God. In the abominations which he describes, the elders, the women, and the priests — the preachers—are all involved. It was while he was in captivity in Babylon that the hand of the Lord was placed upon him and carried him away in vision to the temple at Jerusalem.

Four scenes were then unveiled before the prophet's eyes. First, he stood at the opening of the inner court and looking northward into the outer court he saw what God called "The Image of Jealousy," an idol usurping the worship of Jehovah, who says of Himself "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God."

Ezekiel's position was then changed, doubtless to the gate of the outer wall, and he says, "When I looked, behold a hole in the wall," and at the word of the Lord he began to dig, for the hole was too small for him to pass through; "and . . . behold a door" and entering through the door the prophet found himself in a large and secret room within the Temple precincts, whose walls were painted with every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and standing before them in the act of worship, were the elders of Israel!

Brought back again from the secret chamber he stood at the northern entrance of the Temple precinct and saw a group of women weeping, it says, for Tammuz,—the Greek Adonis, perhaps. You need only remember that the Lord called this also an "abomination" to know that the gross and licentious must have been associated with it.

And then Ezekiel was brought into the very inner court of the Lord's house, and there, on that hallowed ground, he saw the priests, the preachers themselves (about twenty-five of them) "with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun."

It is the second of these scenes and what was going on behind the "hole in the wall" that gives us the text we have used. The form of idolatry was doubtless Egyptian and it was conducted in secret because it involved political intrigue against the reigning government of Babylon. But of it God said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, hast thou not seen what the ancients of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery?" Each of the elders had such a chamber for himself.

You know each soul is a temple, and every heart is an altar, and every child of God is a priest, and what strange fire is it that sometimes is offered there. And what if God could see the kind of worship that is going on, and the things upon which we have really set our hearts. These elders of the

church, worshipping creeping things and quadrupeds in their hidden chamber behind the hole in the wall, knew themselves to be unobserved of men. And it is this fact, that our thoughts and sacred doings are undiscovered to our friends and those about us, that plays no little part in giving character to your hidden life and mine and making the chamber of imagery what it is.

If you have read "Gold Foil," by J. G. Holland, you will remember his Island of Imagination. He says, "It smiles in the sunlight and sleeps in the green; the waves of every ocean kiss its feet and the airs of every clime play upon its trees; flowers bend idly to the fall of fountains and beautiful forms wreathe their white arms, calling for companionship." A maiden gently steers her canoe, drops anchor and disappears beneath the foliage and thinks she is all alone. Along another path there goes a matron. Next comes a lad and he is lost in the labyrinth of the bewitching charm and beauty. Up come yet two other canoes, one containing a young wife and the other her husband. Each disappears beneath the foliage, takes a different path and knows nothing of each other's presence. That girl would blush to tell her mother where she had been; the matron would want no one to know how she had spent the last hour, and the lad would protest his innocence. This husband would deny to his wife where he had spent his time, and the young wife's heart would stand still if she thought her husband knew where she had been. And Holland said, "If God's light could shine upon that crowded island and discover its secrets what shameful things should we witness—fathers, mothers, maidens, men, children whom we had deemed as pure as snow flying with guilty eyes and white lips to hide themselves from their great disgrace.

But listen: God always sees, even though man may not. These elders in their hidden chamber did not seem to think that this is true. They said, "The Lord does not see us; He has forsaken the land." But it is true. You may think to pull

down the blind and close the shutter and keep all eyes out, but God sees, and heaven photographs every thing done, even though it be done in the dark.

What about the chamber of imagery in that soul of yours which God has made to be His temple? Ezekiel, you know, had to dig through the wall to come upon the loathsome abominations he discovered; and so let us dig through just now—through the whitewashed wall of our self-love, and our respectability, and outward show—and see, in the light of God, what is there in the dark behind the walls of our flesh.

1. There is that *unholy imagination,* the slipping out to this enchanted island we heard about a while ago, where, all unseen and undiscovered in the midst of its balmy breezes and sheltering shades, this subtle power of the mind creates and carries on its unholy work.

A certain younger brother, a minister, by the way, told me not long ago of his own struggle in this respect. "It is hard," he said, "to lead another into the sacred precincts of one's own soul, but it is only with the thought and the hope that I might be helped by such a confession that I make mention to you of the thing that humiliates me and shames me, and has robbed me of the peace and the power that I know God would have me enjoy." And then he told me of his susceptibility to every suggestion of impurity in print, on the canvas, or in living form. He had just come from a Victorious Life conference, and he said, "I would give the world, if it were mine, for an experience such as was declared to be possible in the meeting this afternoon."

But, child of God, listen! Is it true that the life of such victory is after all one great impossibility? Is the whole thing a delusion? When God says "Be ye holy as I am holy," is it some *ignis fatuus,* some will-o'-the-wisp we are ever to pursue and never overtake? No, no; but there is such a thing as the "overcoming life." Nor is it necessarily the outcome of fight-

ings so fierce and so severe as to tear almost in pieces the very soul of a man.

There is such a thing as instant recoil from the unholy in thought as well as in action; and such a thing as a quick and sensitive delicacy that makes offensive the very conception of impurity in the heart, and so makes the victory easy where otherwise it would be hard. And I am not encouraging you to a forlorn hope when I say that the Holy Spirit of God can give to you and give to me a heart like that. Do you know that verse we sometimes sing:

> "Give me a heart like Thine,
> By Thy wonderful power;
> By Thy Grace every hour
> Give me a heart like Thine."

And a heart something like that God can effect in your life and mine.

2. *There are other things,* but we cannot dwell upon them now—pictures on the walls in the chamber of imagery.

There is that subtlest of all sins—spiritual pride; and some of us are so controlled by it that we cannot preach—indeed we cannot pray—without thinking more of what other people think of our effort than of how Jesus is magnified, or whether our prayer is reaching the ears of God.

There is the selfish ambition, and the inordinate desire for self-preferment, that leads us sometimes to stoop in order to conquer.

There is that jealousy of a brother more successful than ourselves that has kept us from rejoicing in what God is doing through him. And that is an awful thing.

There is the unkind and unforgiving spirit when umbrage has been taken because of some offending brother.

There is that bitterness in the heart toward God because of some disappointment, or some sorrow, or perhaps bereavement—the will of God for you, which you could not understand.

There is that rebellious spirit because what seemed the will of God for you led by way of the altar and the cross, and you said, "No," while all the time God had been saying, "Yes."

But why go further? It is things such as these in the chamber of imagery that God says are abominations in His sight. And as memory has been painting on the walls of this hidden chamber this afternoon how many of us have been sitting here without the accusing finger of conscience pointing in our faces? And what shall we do about it all if, in the light of what we heard a while ago as to God's will for us in these matters, we do not, first, here in the holy hush of this solemn spot, make high resolve that the days of defeat shall now come to an end; and that henceforth "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise," we will think on these things until by the expulsive power of purified affections we shall know the old life no more.

You know it is said of the little ermine that it will choose rather to die than to defile the pure white of its beautiful fur. And, as princes of God, as you and I in high honor have been called, I like to think of little Prince Louis XVII. During the bloody days of the Commune in Paris, the mob, aroused to a spirit of hellish revenge, broke into the palace, seized King Louis XVI and his beautiful queen, Marie Antoinette, dragged them to the scaffold in what is known as the Place de la Revolution, where the relentless knife of the guillotine finished the diabolical work conceived in their hearts.

Back to the palace they rushed and seized the little prince who was heir to the throne. "To the guillotine with the Dauphin; to the block with the Prince," cried the mob infuriate. Just then one, more diabolical than the others,

pushed the leaders back and shouted, above the clamoring voices, "No, don't kill the little Dauphin and send him to heaven. Let us fit him for hell. Take him over to vile 'Old Meg,' and let her curse and damn his life. Let her feed him with garbage, and clothe him with rags, and teach him to lie and steal and swear." And they took him over, and we are told that the vile old wretch took off his purple robes and made him go in rags. She gave him garbage like swine instead of the food of the king's table. She threw unholy companions about him, and tried to train his lips to rotten, unclean words, his mind to impure thoughts and his heart to devilish deeds. The little fellow suffered to the limits of his endurance, but sometimes they would go too far, and the voice of God in his little soul would rise up against them, and he would draw himself up, shake his curly head, clinch his dimpled fist, stamp his little foot and cry, "I will not do it; I dare not do it, for *I was born to be a king,* and I will not defile myself."

Born to be a king! "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." How then dare we let any unholy passion defile our souls? How dare we let the vile and unclean poison our minds, corrupt our hearts and besmirch our lives? Born to be a king!

But high resolve is not enough. We need *power.* We need *cleansing.* We need to pray the prayer of David, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults"; for, when cleansing comes, power always comes with it. And what the Lord did for poor David, and what He did for poor Peter, He will do for poor you and me.

The story is told of the untuned harp covered up with a curtain in the palace of a prince because it was harsh and shrill and uttered only the most painful discord, and no one could be found to tune it. But years passed by and one day there came into the castle as a guest an old man who surprised the prince by asking why the harp was covered, and

when the reason was given, he said, "May I try to tune it?" And the curtain was drawn back. The old man examined the instrument keenly and handled it fondly, as if it were a little child. For more than an hour he worked away and then asked the prince to assemble the family, for he felt sure that the harp was itself once more. And such music; such enthralling harmonies they had never dreamed could live in a musical instrument of any kind. When the prince could compose himself he said, "Sir, how does it come that when all other musicians have failed in tuning the harp you have succeeded so wonderfully?" And the old man, replying, said, "It is all very simple; I made the harp."

I wonder if your life or mine is like that to-day—a life that is all out of tune. Do you know anything about a voice that screeches, that is harsh and ugly because the heart is out of tune? Perhaps that life and that voice is your own. But we must not think that it is ruined and hopeless beyond repair. There is One who can tune it. There is One who can touch with the finger of redeeming love and infinite power the discordant strings of our hearts and bring them all into harmony with the will of heaven. Who can it be but the One who made it? And if you will turn that poor untuned and disappointing life of yours over to Him all heaven will be thrilled with the answering notes when He has had His way with the instrument. May God help us to do that thing just now!

III

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."—1 John 5:4.

OVERCOMING the world! It sounds like war. You can almost hear the thundering of the cannon, the clashing of weapons, and get a vision of garments rolled in blood. For it is no easy matter, I take it—not a victory to be won by some brief and brilliant *coup d'etat*—this thing of "overcoming the world." With all too many, alas, it is a long-drawn-out Austerlitz or Gettysburg, with the fortunes of the hour in the balance, and sometimes it is victory and sometimes it is defeat.

It is an abrupt turn that John, the apostle of meekness, gives just here to his otherwise peaceful Epistle. It has been flowing along like a "sunkist" brook through a flower-sprinkled meadow land, when suddenly the quiet and placid serenity is disturbed by the wild whoop of a war-cry: "To arms! The world is to be overcome!"

There are two words and one phrase here that have been given a meaning so entirely peculiar to the Christian religion that they have come to distinguish it from every other system of religion or morality that humanity has ever known. These words and that phrase are found in our text. The words are "the world" and "faith," and the phrase is "born of God."

1. *The World.* What does John mean by the world which we are to overcome? Did not God make this world, and are we not to love the things that God hath made? And yet somewhere in the inspired record we are told to "Love

not the world," and the writer of our text distinctly says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Why does John consider the world an enemy to be overcome? And why does James say that "friendship with the world is enmity with God"? Can it be that there is something about this world which God has made that is unholy? Perhaps Paul can answer us best when he says, "Christ has redeemed us from *this present evil world.*"

It is not, of course, the outward frame of things—the physical world—to which Paul refers. The word he used was "aionos," and ought really to be translated "age"—"this present evil age." And that John used the word "kosmos," which is rightly translated "world," in much the same sense with Paul's word "age," is seen from the fact that he continually used it so elsewhere. Thus in chapter three he speaks of the world hating us, even as Jesus, using the same word, "kosmos," says: "If the world hate you ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

Now, because of this personification of the world, we must not refer it, with John Wesley, alone to worldly people. It is true that the world's hate is manifested through them, for was it not "the princes of this world who crucified the Lord of glory"? But it is rather the inordinate love of the things of this world—its riches, its power, its pleasures—that fills men with the spirit of the world, and so causes them to hate both the people and the things of God. It is the world, then, that "lies in wickedness," the world where sin and death reign, the "course of this world, the spirit of which," Paul says, "now worketh in the children of disobedience"—in short, it is worldliness. It manifests itself now in one way and now in another.

And what an enemy this world is! No wonder we are told to "put on the whole armor of God." The spirit of this world! See how it works and what it has done!

It was a bad old world in which John and the "little children" to whom he wrote lived—false, cruel, and licentious; and it is the spirit of the same old "present evil age" that operates to-day until its various forms of unbelief and godlessness surge up to the very doors of the sanctuary.

In its lust for wealth it has caused Christian nations to do deeds of shame for which we must forever blush—our own nation to traffic in human flesh and blood; and Great Britain to force the opium trade, with all its hellish horrors, upon a poor and heathen people begging in humanity's name for mercy.

In its lust for power it has caused Christian nations to impose an almost unbearable tax on the poor man's bread to maintain their huge standing armies and their cruel engines of war, and set Christian emperors like Germany's Kaiser on careers of world conquest that have caused the rivers to run red with blood.

In its lust for fame and glory it has given us the Cæsars and the Napoleons and the Lord Clives of the world, with the trail of blood and shame and dishonor they have left behind them.

And in its lust for pleasure and the excitement of the flesh it has rotted away what at one time was much of the world's choicest civilization, and God only knows what will be the end with us if we do not soon slacken the speed in the alarming pace we are setting for ourselves in this respect. It is no surprise that the world that knows no god but pleasure should live as we see it living to-day, but that the line of demarcation between the people of the world and the people of the church should have become so indistinct in this respect —this is sad, indeed.

A number of unclean theatricals in a certain city were recently stopped by the police midway in the play, while in the boxes and the parquet was a goodly proportion of church-member patrons. Our great prize-fights are now graced by

the presence of congressmen and other distinguished gentlemen, and ladies, as well, who are at the same time members of our churches.

Sunday golf tournaments, Sunday baseball, and Sunday night dances all claim a plentiful number of professing Christians among their patrons. Prize-winning bridge parties are quite the thing nowadays among church members who twenty-five years ago would have shaken their heads in resolute disapproval; and to these and other forms of indulgence, either questionable or admittedly unholy, professing Christians have been giving themselves to such a degree that to-day we find ourselves with a church going on crutches, unable to stand erect and be the power for righteousness God meant her to be, because the world has been boring its way like a putrifying abscess into her very vitals, her very heart.

Listen to this conversation:

"Dick," said a young wife, "I've been a very happy woman for four years now, but if only one other thing could be, I think I'd be the happiest woman in the world."

"Well, Mollie, what is it? I'd do anything for you."

"Oh, Dick! If you were only a Christian!"

"Well, Mollie, are you a Christian?"

"Why, yes, Dick."

"Well, Mollie, I—didn't know it."

Dick went into a brown study for a moment and then said, "Mollie, you don't swear, do you?"

"No, Dick."

"Well, I don't either. Mollie, you don't steal, do you?"

"No, Dick."

"Well, I don't either. And Mollie, you don't get drunk, do you?"

"Why, no, Dick; of course I don't! Why do you ask me such questions?"

"Well, Mollie, you play cards, don't you, and for prizes?"

"Certainly, Dick; there's no harm in that."

"Well, Mollie, I do, too."

"Mollie, you go to the theater, don't you?"

"Why, yes, Dick."

"Well, I do, too. And Mollie, you drink wine, don't you?"

"Oh, yes; I do that out of courtesy to the hostess."

"Well, I do, too. And Mollie, you dance, don't you?"

"Why, yes; I love to dance."

"Well, Mollie, I do, too. And now, Mollie, if you will tell me the difference between the kind of life you are living and the kind of life I am living, I think I would be willing to become a Christian, if there's any difference."

Mollie sat down and thought a moment, and then burst into tears. And then Dick said, "I did not mean to hurt your feelings; you must forgive me."

"No, Dick, it is I who need to ask you for your forgiveness; and by the grace of God you shall have a Christian woman for a wife from this time on."

Just fourteen months from that time Dick Van Cott, son of the former postmaster of New York City, as fine a young man as ever you saw, twice elected to Congress in that great state, stood up in a religious gathering and said: "For six months I have been a Christian won to Christ by the earnest, beautiful, consistent Christian life of my devoted wife."

Listen! If the religion of Jesus Christ doesn't make any difference between the way you live and the way your unconverted friends or relatives live, it is not worth recommending to them as a religion for doing the things the religion of Jesus Christ is supposed to do. "He that is born of God overcometh the world."

2. *And what does it mean to be "born of God"?* It means, of course, by whatever way it be brought about, that such an one must necessarily have become a partaker of the nature of God (as truly as you are now in a physical way a partaker of the nature of your earthly father) and so is

possessed of and equipped by the all-conquering Spirit of God. "We have been made partakers of the divine nature."

"Born of God." What is unborn is dead. Nothing multiplied by nothing is ever nothing. You can plaster a stone into bulk, but you cannot make it grow.

Neither is this nature an improvement of the old nature. How utterly impotent do the modern evolutionists stand before the gap between the moral and spiritual sentiments of the human soul and the best and the highest (if there is anything of the kind) that can be found in brute creation; and how ridiculously absurd is the attempt of Sir John Lubbock to fill in that gap "by his miserable ape, which 'crossed in love,' or 'pining with cold and hunger' conceives for the first time in its poor addled pate 'the dread of evil to come' and so becomes the father of theology."

No, no; it is a new nature, a new life implanted in the soul. And without this nature, without this life, there can be, of course, no such thing as overcoming the world. The old nature is in love with the world, and there can be no reason, no incentive for overcoming the world until a love for God and the things of God is born in the soul.

There are men like Grillus. You may remember that Circe, with her powerful magic, turned him into a swine, and shut him up in a sty and fed him swill and other things that swine do like. Ulysses came along and offered to turn him into a man again. But Grillus said, "No, the life of a hog is so much pleasanter."

"But," said Ulysses, "do you make no account of eloquence, poetry, and music?"

"No, I would rather grunt than be eloquent like you."

"But," asked Ulysses, "how can you endure this nastiness and stench?"

"It all depends," said Grillus, "on the taste; the odor is sweeter to me than that of amber, and the filth than the nectar of the gods."

And so does the old nature love the things of the world, though the things of God be sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

But, you know, or do you not know, that the more one comes to understand God, the more he appreciates God and the more he loves God and the things of God, and the more the things of this world lose their attraction for him.

You know how Ulysses got by the enchanting music of the Sirens. He put wax in the sailors' ears and had them bind him to the masts. That is one way. Just make hard and fast rules, and if people break them, be ugly about it, and turn them out of the church. But there is a better way. When Orpheus sailed by the Sirens sang their sweetest music, but the sailors never turned their heads to listen because they had Orpheus on board and he sang a sweeter song than the Sirens ever knew. Ah, you tell me how wonderful it is to dance, and what a fascination there is about this and other forms of worldly indulgence!

Oh, child, why do you do yourself this wrong. It is simply because you have never known what it is to have Orpheus on board. And this is why the shore line of this sorcerous and deceitful old world is strewn with the wrecks of what might have been God's choicest living temples for the setting forth of His glory unto the sons of men. If you could ever hear Orpheus sing you would know the meaning of what a certain mighty man of God has called the "expulsive power of a new affection."

But the music that Orpheus makes is not for the natural ear. Paul says that the old nature, the natural man, cannot understand God, that he cannot appreciate God, and that therefore he cannot love God. He does not say that he *may not,* nor that he *must not,* know the things of God. He says that he *cannot.* By the very nature of his spiritual condition such knowing, and such appreciation, and such consequent loving of God and the things of God is impossible.

"Verily, verily," says Jesus, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," much less be victorious through the life it produces in the soul.

But is it true that everyone who is born of God overcomes the world? John says it is. And he furthermore makes it emphatic in the second half of our text when he says, "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

3. *Faith.* This is the other distinguishing characteristic of the Christian religion. John seems here to identify the conquest with the faith which is ours. In other words, he says that where there is faith there is victory.

Some tell us, therefore, that the faith here referred to is not the faith *by which* we believe, but the faith which *is* believed. Faith in an objective sense, and not in a subjective one. Certainly in a sense this is true. You might believe many things; indeed, many things about Jesus, and you could get up and beautifully rattle off your Confession of Faith (like the gabble of the geese that saved the Capitol), and yet be a stranger to the victory that overcomes the world. It is the thing you believe—the objective, outside thing—that makes the victory possible.

There are some to-day who tell us that people are tired of what they call ancient and antiquated creeds. But ancient things are not always antiquated. The sun has ruled a long time by day, but what if it did not rise to-morrow? The Lord God Himself is called the "Ancient of Days," but we can hardly afford to dispense with Him for that reason. What do you mean by a religion without a creed? As well try to build a skyscraper without a foundation. You say, "Just Christ Himself is enough." Yes, but what kind of Christ? One kind for you and another kind for me? Oh, it is true, as another has said, that "In this shifting, elastic, to-and-fro time, in the present ebb and flow and perpetual flux of religious opinion or non-opinion, a creed is as necessary to the church as the vertebral column is to the human body."

"And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." What faith? The Westminster Confession of Faith? Not exactly, although it is a grand old scroll. The Apostles' Creed? Well, that suits us all a little better,—that wonderful old document that reads as if God Himself had penned it. But let us ask John; and we hear him say, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" This is the faith—this is the objective, outside thing that overcomes the world—the faith of which the glorious fact that Jesus is the Son of God is the one and only true expression.

But I am inclined to believe that John could never have meant here to divorce the one from the other—the objective from the subjective. Certainly, if the thing believed be not true, it is a useless, disappointing thing. But, on the other hand, though true, if it be not believed it can do no good. And this is why John says, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

And if you should ask why this is the victory that overcomes the world, it is simply because it will bring us into union with Him who is the Son of God. It makes us even as He is, and so causes us in our character as those "born of God" to be with Him partakers of His victory.

Now listen: "Be of good cheer," He says, "I have overcome the world." Here is one phase of the victory that is ours. It was on the Cross that the stupendous work was done that gave to Him this world-conquering triumph, and being in Him, though there is ever conflict along the way, the "born of God" never contemplates defeat, never faints when the conflict is fierce, because he knows that ultimate victory has been purchased for him.

This is without doubt the chief thought of the text; but oh, never make the mistake of thinking that there is victory of that kind for you, and no other victories that must be won

in the constant conflict along the way. And, thank God! these victories are possible, too.

I know that the world, with its lust of the flesh, its lust of the eye, and the pride of life, with its riches and its honors, is no Lilliputian enemy to overcome. We contend not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world—the very Devil himself—but, thank God! "there is one in us who is greater than he who is in the world." And this One has broken the diabolical power that rules and sways in a godless world like this, and while this power is too mighty for us, single-handed and alone, it is possible to overcome and to do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us.

When Joshua had flung back the five-kinged confederacy he thrust the princes into a cave, and when the battle was over he said to the chiefs who had fought with him, "Come near and put your feet upon the necks of these kings." And just so Christ has made it possible for the humblest among those born of God to subjugate the great enemy of his soul, if he will.

O child of God, are you overcoming the world, or are you being overcome by the world? Shame that you should be found in the movies on prayer meeting nights because you love the movies more than you love the house of God! Shame that you should be found pleasure-riding in your automobile while the church bells are calling you to the worship of the Christ who redeemed you! Shame that you should be found in places and doing things where, if Christ should come unexpectedly, as He will come, you would not want to be found or seen so doing!

Paul said that the world was crucified to him. When a thing is crucified it is supposed to be dead. And what a loathsome thing a dead, decaying corpse really is. If it were the corpse of your dearest loved one you would not keep it

long in your arms or within your sight, but bury it away. The dead and decomposing has no charm for you.

And then Paul said, too, "I am crucified with Christ." When one is crucified he is supposed to be dead, but I wonder if it is not true that some of us make mighty lively corpses when we are around where the things of the world are being enjoyed Shame that any professing child of God should so live that the world can see no difference between his life and their own!

Do you know that little couplet:

> "If all the members were just like me,
> What kind of a church would my church be?"

Listen: In all that a man is or is not; in all that he does or does not; in the sum total of his own character, consciously or otherwise, his life is affecting other lives.

The story is told in mythology of a goddess who came unseen, but was always known by the blessings she left in her pathway. Trees blackened by forest fires put forth new leaves as she passed by; in her footprints at the brookside violets sprang up, the stagnant pool became a spring of sparkling water, the parched fields blossomed as the rose, and every hillside and valley blushed with new life and beauty. This is a beautiful prophecy which may be literally fulfilled in your life and mine to-day.

The story is also told of a beautiful Indian princess, sent as a present to a king. About her was an atmosphere as sweet-smelling as the garments of Aphrodite. She seemed as beautiful and pure as if "fresh from a bath of dew," and her breath was as the sweet perfume of the richest rose. But, strangely enough, in the atmosphere that she carried about with her was the contagion of death. From her infancy this beautiful woman had known no food but poison. She had been reared upon it, and had become so permeated with it that she herself became the very essence of it. She would

breathe her fragrant breath into a swarm of insects and, behold, they would lie dead at her feet. She would place the loveliest flowers upon her bosom and, lo, they would fade and fall away. Into her presence came a humming-bird; it fluttered, poised a moment, shuddered and fell in death.

And how like this poison-princess is every man whose influence is a blight and curse upon his fellow-men. We live, and the atmosphere we exhale is richly laden with the fragrance of virtue, or with the poisonous perfumes that consume.

We are writing a gospel,
  A chapter each day,
By the deeds that we do,
  By the words that we say;
Men read what we write,
  Though it be false or true;
Say! What is the gospel
  According to you?

IV

UNCONSCIOUS SPIRITUAL LOSS

"And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."—Judges 16:20.

IT IS SAID of Rowland Hill that, when an old man of eighty-four and just before he died, one Sunday night when the lights had been put out in Surrey Chapel, the verger in attendance heard him go to and fro in the aisle, singing to himself,

> "When I am to die, 'Receive me,' I'll cry,
> For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why;
> But this I do find, we two are so joined,
> He'll not be in heaven and leave me behind."

I never could get very much interested in discussing the question, or even thinking about it, as to whether it is possible for a child of God to go so far away as to be numbered among the souls that are lost. Apart from anything that might be said one way or the other, I find myself always shrinking back from the thought that it is possible for a limb to be torn from the mystical body of Christ.

The reason why I am not interested in the discussion is because I know that one grain of faith directed toward Christ forms a union between Him and myself that neither heaven, nor earth, nor hell can ever break. And the best thing to me in the whole story of Samson's strange and checkered career is that the Lord, whom he had so greatly dishonored, heard his penitent cry, made him once more a miracle of strength and saved him even in the moment of his tragic death.

Samson's only companions in his dungeon, or grinding at his mill, were his remorseful thoughts. He saw then that he

had ruined himself beyond repair for this life. With Lord Byron he could have said,

> "My days are in the yellow leaf,
> The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker and the grief
> Are mine alone."

With Oscar Wilde he could have written another "De Profundus." He saw his ruinous folly, the betrayal of his holy trust, the life of shame and defeat, and "out of the depths" he cried for the light and strength of God's presence again, and to be remembered once more with the old love; "O Lord God," he cried, "remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me." And his cry was not in vain.

But apart from the question of eternal security and what shall be in the end, think of what many a man might have been, and what he might have done for God, of the power that might have been his, and of the ministry that he might have performed because of the Spirit of the Lord resting upon him, as He rested upon Samson, and then think of his being shorn of his power, of coming to the place where God can no longer use him, of becoming a derelict on an ocean where a lost world is sinking down, of becoming something of what Paul must have meant when he said, "Lest that by any means when I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway"! This is the sad thing. This is the thing to make angels weep.

And this was Samson. The man who tore the lion's jaws apart; the man who slew a thousand of his enemies with a sun-whitened bone picked up from the field; the man who pulled Gaza's ponderous gates up by their roots; the man who broke new ropes like flax that had been burned with fire! And yet, yonder he is, this hero who had not lost a battle for twenty years though his single arm had been pitted against a whole nation, succumbing to his sneering enemies

"like a wounded lion to a pack of yelping hounds"—yonder he is with his eyes bored out, bound in fetters of brass, grinding corn in his prison house.

It was sin that put Samson there. It was sin that put his eyes out. It was sin that bound him with fetters of brass. It was sin that made him grind at the mill. Oh, the blinding power of sin—

1. It bores out the eyes of the soul, and the delicate distinction of other days between right and wrong fades away, and

> "Vice is a monster of so frightful mein,
> As to be hated needs but to be seen;
> Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

2. And how it binds! "There is no use to talk to me," said a young man, "I am the victim of a certain passion and I can no more hold dominion over it when it comes upon me than a bird can fly without wings."

3. And how it grinds! You know,

> "The gods are just and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us."

There are people today, perhaps within the sound of my voice, that would give a world, if they had it, if they could just be free from the thing that has mastered them and made them its slave because of a guilty conscience that is gnawing at their souls and grinding out of it all the worthwhileness of spiritual experience, and robbing them of the peace and the power of God.

> "Though the mills of God grind slowly,
> Yet they grind exceeding small."

If Samson had sought a bit the advice of God there would have been a different story to tell, and it's strange you never read of his doing it. He was self-willed and he was always mixed up with the wrong kind of company. The best way to fight temptation is to do what the Parthians did — run away. But Samson walked deliberately into it.

He went down to Timnath and there he saw a Philistine girl. His parents tried to reason with him, but as well try to reason with a prairie fire as with a young man when he is in love. He turned his wedding feast into a drunken gambling carousal. It was his first great mistake and the woman caused him a world of trouble until she quit him forever.

For twenty years the curtain dropped and then again Samson went down at what seems to have been the weak point in his life. This time he went down to Gaza and the wonder of it is that after his sin God gave him strength to tear up the gates of Gaza—that He did not then depart from him; and we wonder too if, as he ran lightly up the mountain side, he did not carry a heavier weight than the gates upon his head—the burden of his awful guilt upon his soul.

But Samson's sin was slowly getting the better of him, though he did not seem to know it. He made his getaway in fine shape every time. But one sin unrepented always makes way for more; it keeps up the Devil's interest in the soul. And next came a third woman to fill up the cup of his shame. This was Delilah, who made Samson to sleep on her knees. The record says Samson loved Delilah, and yet this woman, for $3,000, was willing to heartlessly betray him into the hands of his enemies for torture and for death.

The Philistines wanted to get him, and they offered her this amount to deliver him into their hands. They knew where his weakness lay, although they did not understand his strength. And so Delilah deliberately set about her heartless, unholy task. Samson had an impulsive, ardent temperament and no one knew it by this time more than Delilah, and she

used every physical charm she possessed to weaken his will.

In a toyful sort of way, as if she never meant to be serious, she said, "Tell me, Samson, how can you be bound, and not be able to get away."

And in the same half serious way he said, "Bind me with green withes."

And when she had done it she called the Philistines, who were lying in wait. They rushed upon him, but he snapped the withes as if they were of thread. Three times she tried; a second time with new ropes, and the third with his seven locks of hair woven into the web on her loom, and each time as the Philistines rushed upon him he tore himself loose and laughed in their faces.

It is hard to know why he did not seem to discern the evid design they were plotting against him. But Samson was blind long before they put out his eyes, and his infatuation for this impure woman overruled his sense of duty to his God, and while his hands were still strong, fettered with the invisible bonds of a harlot's love, at last he gave up the battle.

He told her all his heart and said, "I have upon myself the vow of a Nazarite; there hath not come a razor upon mine head; if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man."

"And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; . . . and his strength went from him."

And when the Philistines burst upon him, he awoke out of his sleep, and he said, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself," and "he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

Now there are four things that are made conspicuous by what has thus far been said.

First, *it was the Spirit of the Lord resting upon Samson that made him strong.* "And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him." There was nothing in his seven locks

that made him strong. Samson was not a Cyclops — not a man of towering height; and all this added the more to the wonder of his enemies. It was the gift of heaven that made him a conqueror. It was the Omnipotent One Himself who wrought so mightily through him. You never hear of Samson doing any remarkable thing only as the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.

And, my friends, we need to learn this lesson. Apart from the Spirit of God the soul is a failure. "Without Me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." "And yet, "I can do all things through Christ," says Paul.

My brother minister, my Christian worker, my friend, have you been persuading yourself that when Jesus said, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you," He was speaking of a thing that could be true only of His immediate disciples? Have you been thinking that Paul, when he said, "Be filled with the Spirit," was dealing only in meaningless generalities, or vague and empty metaphors? No, no; but the rather is this power one of the most real things in the universe of God, and it is for you and for me as much as it ever was for anyone back in the days when the followers of Jesus went forth in the name of the Lord of hosts. And we shall stand weak and ashamed in the presence of the sin that so easily besets us, and powerless before the mighty accomplishments that might be ours until we learn through a blessed experience of our own that the Holy Spirit of God, already indwelling the believer's soul, can so take charge of that soul of yours and mine and so charge it with His power as to repeat through us the marvels of Pentecost and send us out as He did His servants of old to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant, and do valiant things in the name of our God.

You can turn a ponderous machine by hand and achieve some result, but you can attach it to a mighty dynamo and multiply its efficiency a hundred, yes, a thousand fold. And

why not, my brother, if you have been working only with the power of the intellect, with human energy and zeal, but with poor effect — why not put yourself in touch with the mighty power of the Holy Ghost and let Him work out His will through you?

I know a little of what it means. I want to know more and more as the years go by. I used to think Moody had a monopoly on God, but I learned the secret of his power when I discovered that God had a monopoly on Moody. And this is the way it must be.

Dr. A. J. Gordon saw one day the trolley car reach up its hand and lay hold on the wire above charged with the electric current, and all the power of that mighty energy of nature was at its disposal. The trolley, in fact, does not lay hold of the electricity, but the electricity the rather lays hold of the trolley that simply touches the wire. And Dr. Gordon determined that he would make trial in himself as to how far a man might be laid hold of by the Holy Spirit and be transformed into God's likeness and used for God's service. And you know the story of his life. "And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him."

Second, *it was sin that caused Samson to lose his power.* This we have already seen. But we must not get an idea that only sin like Samson's can rob us of our power. You know it was said in John, "The Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified," and it might not be impertinent to ask whose glory you are seeking in your ministry, in your work, or in your life. The trouble with Samson, after all, was that he put himself before God.

Then there is jealousy, and envy, perhaps secret sin, and unholy meditation, and other things. But why go into particulars? You yourself know whether there is anything in your life that in inconsistent with the perfect majesty and the perfect purity of the Holy Spirit who has made your body His temple. And so far as that body itself is concerned I like the

words of another who said, "If my body is really the temple, the residence, and the throne of the Holy Ghost, I must be as careful of it as I would be if I were the custodian of a temple in the inner part of which the light of God did shine." And more than this I need not say.

Third, *it was an unconscious loss.* "And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

His strength was all gone before he knew he had lost a particle of it. There he slept on Delilah's knees as calmly as ever he slept when his power was still magnificent. But when he opened his eyes, and in the face of his emergency shook himself as before, he found it was all in vain.

Unconscious deterioration and loss of power! It is possible, and it is terrible, and it has been the ruin of thousands. It was when the Philistines rushed upon Samson that he realized his true condition. If there had been no emergency such as this he doubtless would have gone on, all unconscious still of the awful tragedy that had taken place.

The pity of it is that there are those today who are like Samson with his shorn locks, but all unconscious of the terrible truth. The Lord hath departed, but they know it not. But some day the emergency will come.

The lion will roar and you will go down.

The gates will close upon you and you will stand dumb and powerless before them.

A thousand enemies will rush upon you and the jawbone will be as a willow twig in your hand.

The fork in the road will come and to your consternation you will discover your Guide is gone.

You will reach out for power and it will not be where once it was.

You will put your hand upon the throttle and the engine will fail to move.

There are men who are standing in the pulpit today and have forgotten the Lord who placed them there.

Instead of building up the most holy faith of our fathers they are lending themselves to an unholy propaganda to largely tear it down. Accepting the theory of organic evolution they have become obsessed, seemingly, with an aversion for the supernatural in general, and, consequently, the miraculous birth of Christ, and the miraculous resurrection, and all else miraculous are no longer essential to the worship of true belief.

But by their fruits ye shall know them, and it might be well to consult the church records to see who really are the preachers who are winning the lost to Christ. I notice that a very prominent church, with a minister who has been much in the limelight, a church with every advantage of wealth and opportunity, added to its membership last year just one soul —and even that, you know, is possible without that soul having truly seen and found the real Christ.

It is sad indeed to see one who is supposed to be a minister of the Gospel with a record such as that. The charm of personality is there, the discourse is learned, the entire service is refined to an esthetic nicety, and the audience is largely delighted; but something vital is lacking; there is a lost chord; no one is moved to attempt the heroic for Christ's sake; there are no tears of penitence, no smiting on sin-troubled breasts; no one to cry,

> "To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
> O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

And yet the minister thought he had a great service! "And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

And there are church members, thousands of them, of whom this thing is true. Having begun in the Spirit they have turned to the flesh, as Paul told the Galatians. Every form of worldy indulgence they enjoy and the holy Sabbath is a day of pleasure. They hug a false hope; they think they

are saved, but know not that the Lord hath departed from them.

And there are others whose Christian experience was once buoyant and free, but gradually a change has crept in and the soul has been hurt, yet they do not seem to know it. They attend church with reasonable regularity; you sometimes hear them lead in prayer; they act much as Christian people ought to act, and every outward appearance seems to indicate Christian character. But the heart is empty, the soul is cramped, and if you could look within you would have to write "Ichabod" over the temple of their spiritual life. The Lord has gone out, but they do not seem to know it. "And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

It that you? Then listen a moment to a fourth thing.

Fourth. The Spirit of the Lord was given again to Samson. He saw the frightful mistake he had made and he was sorry for what he had done. In penitence he cried unto God, and God gave him once more the strength of the days of old.

We cannot recover the irreparable past. There are things which once done can never be undone. This fact we have to face. But, while facing it, we can reassert ourselves for the future and turn again to God and the Spirit of the Lord will come upon us.

"As I walked through the woodland meadows
  Where sweet the thrushes sing,
I found on a bed of mosses
  A bird with a broken wing.
I healed its wound and each morning
  It sang the same sweet strain,
But the bird with the broken pinion
  Never soared as high again.

"I found a young life smitten
  With sin's seductive art,
And moved with a Christlike pity
  I took him to my heart.

He lived with a noble purpose,
  He struggled not in vain,
But the life that sin had stricken
  Never soared as high again."

These words, they tell us, were one time printed in a newspaper in one of our eastern cities. A copy of the paper, having been carried to San Francisco, found its way into a penitentiary near by and into the hands of one of the convicts. But he was a convict who had really found Christ in the midst of his prison confinement, and he took his pencil and added another verse which ends like this:

"But the life that sin has stricken
  With all its guilt and stain,
By Jesus' grace and merit
  Can soar as high again."

I wonder if it is true, as some poet has put it, that we always may be what we might have been. But even though this be not true in every sense, it is true that if we will bring our lives with all their mistakes and shortcomings, with all their sorrows and their sins, and place them in the hands of the loving Lord,

"That will be the hour,
  When the tree of life will burst into flower,
And rain at our feet a glorious dower
  Of something grander,"—

something more lovely and more beautiful, than ever we have dared to dream.

"And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." Oh, that some one might see the mistake he has been making! That some one might cry, "Strengthen me, Lord God, as of old!" That some one might begin again the life of peace and of power! That some one might feel again the hand of the Lord upon him and go forth to do mighty things in the name of God!

V.

BACK TO BETHEL

"Arise, go up to Bethel."—Genesis 35:1.

I SOMETIMES find myself thinking that God has allowed us to look a little more closely at the lives of some of the Old Testament saints because He knew that there would be so many others like them in the world today.

This is especially true of Jacob, but I think that God would have us understand that, if He would forgive the mistakes of Jacob and do for him eventually all that He did do, some of us should not despair because we have failed and suffered defeat and are somewhat disappointed in our Christian experience, and may perhaps be living to-day with the fragments of shattered ideals strewn about our feet.

If there are those of us to-day who have been untrue, and have gotten away from God, I want that we shall take a look through Jacob's experience, at the way God deals with His erring children, and go with Jacob back to Bethel to-day.

Jacob had taken an unkind and unfair advantage of his hungry brother and had gotten his birthright away from him, and had then found it convenient, because of his brother's anger, to take a hasty departure with the intent of going over to his uncle Laban.

It was the first night out. Jacob was alone, and lonely enough, to be sure, with a bundle of belongings in one hand, and a staff in the other; an exile without escort, he ended his first day's journey in the midst of a barren waste strewn with boulders, and while the stars shone down upon him, and the night winds moaned upon him, he made his bed and lay

down to sleep. And as he slept he dreamed, and the stones about him seemed to pile themselves one upon another until they reached, in form like a ladder, from his pillow up into the starry heavens above him; and up and down the ladder there trooped the angels of God, to show him that even the wilderness was a gateway to heaven if he would have it so; and from the top of the ladder he heard the voice of God. And in the morning as he woke he remembered the vision, and recalled the voice of God promising to be with him. And Jacob made a vow to God that henceforth he would do the will of God, and that he would be all that God would have him be.

This is the first instance, I think, in the Bible, of a man making a vow to God; and oh, the pity of it, that it was so soon forgotten! And I wonder how many of us now, just at this point, must begin to read Jacob's experience into our own.

He stayed with his uncle Laban for twenty years, but while he was there this man who had been given a vision of angels had stooped to do things that were not worthy of a son of God. He had borne out again the reputation of his name. You know the name "Jacob" means "supplanter," "swindler," "deceiver." And yet these same angels of God came to his rescue and escorted him from the land.

Then God brought him on his way as far as the river Jabbok, and there, you will remember, Jacob had his midnight wrestle. There his name was changed, and God called him back into princeliness. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel"—a Prince of God.

The angel of the Lord had called him back and lifted him up to a higher experience. And then, to think of the very next day! He met Esau and Esau forgave him, fell on his neck and kissed him, and then, instead of trusting God and going on home, he deceived his brother again, and, turning to one side, he hurried away toward Shechem, and this

man, to whom God was waiting to give the whole land, bought a parcel of ground for a hundred pieces of money, and became a freeholder among the uncircumcised enemies of God.

And then Dinah, you know—the poor child—went out to see the daughters of the land; and you know the whole sad story and its sequel, and how Jacob's name was "made to stink among the inhabitants of the land." And then God came once more and said, "Jacob, arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there." And Jacob was glad to go. He had to go somewhere, and where was there a place like Bethel, where God had met him, and promised to be with him, and where the angels had come and gone.

Then Jacob said unto his household and all that were with him, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."

And now which one of us has not seen in all this something of his own life?

If we were to rise up just now, everyone who has made some solemn covenant with God—and many of us more than one—and who knows that the vow has not been realized in his life; everyone who has responded to the call of the princely life in Christ Jesus, and then has run away from it—if every such one should rise now and make confession of it there would not be many of us to remain silent.

But here's the thing of chief concern just now. Perhaps some of us have gone away, some of us farther than others, and we have not yet come back; but oh,

> "If thou could'st in vision see
> Thyself, the man God meant;
> Thou never more could'st be
> The man thou art, content."

Oh, that God could speak through me to-day, and in some way show us where we are living. Oh, that I could compare the angel-visioned hours of Bethel that may be yours to-day with the Shechem-life and you would not need an angel voice to say to you, "Arise, and go up to Bethel," but you would say, "Great, glorious Christ, let this be Bethel for me to-day."

Gregory Mantle has called attention to five things that happened when Jacob got back to Bethel.

1. *There Was the Old Protection.* His life during the days of his disobedience had been in constant peril. He had to leave Shechem lest his enemies, as he said, "gather themselves together against me and slap me." But as he journeyed "up to Bethel" "the terror of God," it says, "was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue." The Old Protection! "I am with thee and will keep thee in all the places whither thou goest," said the Lord.

Never mind about your enemies, about the things that harass, about the things that you dread; get back to Bethel and "God will take care of you."

> "I know not where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond His love and care."

"Arise, go up to Bethel."

2. *There Was the Old Pillar.* Thirty years before Jacob had raised a pillar there to commemorate his vision and his vow. What memories that old moss-covered stone must have brought back, and here on this spot, using doubtless the same old stone, he built an altar and worshipped God.

What a glory must have been in his soul! What a joy must have thrilled his breast! Have you been saying,

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"Where is the joy that once I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?"

It is just where you left it. Arise, and go back to Bethel!

3. *There Was the Old Princeliness.* You remember why God changed Jacob's name that night when he wrestled with him at Jabbok's ford, and called him a "Prince of God." But Jacob had proven himself unworthy, and had not lived as one with a name like that ought to live.

And if you could but hear the unspoken language of many a heart it would be saying, "I, too, have been unworthy of the name." And some of you are in distress because of it. But listen! and you will hear the voice of God saying, "I will make you a Prince again; arise and go back to Bethel."

4. *There Was the Old Promise.* It was here at Bethel that God had first promised Jacob and to his seed after him all the blessings, all the privileges, and all the high prerogatives of the birthright. And now that Jacob had come back the old Promise was renewed with an emphasis and a freshness surpassing even that of its first utterance.

Think of the birthright of a child of God! The blessings, the high privileges which are his through the grace given unto him in the Lord Jesus Christ! Of all that God meant that you and I should be in the way of purity of heart, and peace of soul, and power for service! And then think of how far short we have fallen, and of how sad are the words, "It might have been." But God can remedy all this. If there is any place where the words of the poet are true—those words which say, "we always may be what we might have been"—it is in the experience of the Christian. And what God had planned for you and me may yet be true if we will only get back. Arise, and go back to Bethel!

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5. *And Then There Was the Old Prayer-Life.* It says in verse thirteen that God talked with Jacob there.

A little child crawled into its father's lap and said, "Papa, is God dead?"

"Why do you ask such a question, child?"

"Because," said the little one, "I don't hear you talking to Him any more like you used to." And the man's head dropped upon his breast.

Listen! "Is God dead; is God dying out of your life?" There is no power in your prayer. Perhaps you don't pray because you feel you have no right to pray; because you feel that God will not talk with you as He talked with Jacob.

If you went back to Bethel it would be different. Why not arise and go back to-day?

Yes, I know the journey is not without price. There's something that must be left behind and there's a getting ready for the journey. Do you remember the little grave that Jacob dug under the oak at Shechem and what he buried there? Listen! when God said, "Arise, go up to Bethel," Jacob, without a moment's hesitation, said, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise and go up to Bethel."

First, "*Put Away the Strange Gods!*" These were the teraphim, the little idols that Rachel had stolen from Laban. And then many of his servants were image-worshippers. It seems strange that Jacob could have tolerated such things; but not any more strange than the toleration of that thing in your life or mine that has robbed us of power and kept us away from God.

An idol is something that takes the place of God; something that you may have put before God in your life.

It is sad to think of a man who has been mightily used of God, but whose usefulness seems now to be almost wholly gone. But many an one will bear witness out of a bitter experience, in the secret place of his own soul, that all this

has come about, together with the decay of his inner life, just in proportion as his heart became fixed upon some idol-love that crowded Christ to one side.

You have been ambitious for yourself, and loved reputation and prominence more than God. There has been a certain indulgence fastened upon your heart, into the lawfulness of which you have reasoned yourself by plausible arguments, though all the time the Spirit of God has been whispering, "Better not." You have been putting something else before God.

You know Jacob buried his idols under the oak at Shechem. They were harmless things in themselves—little golden images and ear-rings with idol images stamped upon them—why not keep them, but not worship them?

I think Jacob knew human nature too well, and then I think he wanted even to forget the past. He felt the time had come when his surrender must be complete.

We always have a burial service in our evangelistic meetings where we stand together and forever put away the thing that stands between the soul and the revelation of God's glory in it. Why not have a grave prepared for something like that to-day?

Second, *Be Clean*. This meant to wash the body, but it was a token of the cleansing of the heart. How can we go back to Bethel, back to the place of blessing, and carry with us in our heart some known sin as we go?

Recently a boy died of diphtheria in a Minnesota village. The family moved from the house and had the whole house sulphurized, with the exception of one small closet that had not been used. Some weeks after moving back into the house the mother took a shawl out of the closet and wrapped it around the remaining child and went on a visit to some friends. Diphtheria broke out in the family visited, and carried off three of that family before it ceased its deadly work. Sin is a deadly thing, no matter how small it is, and no con-

secration is complete that does not offer to God the whole heart for His cleansing power, every nook and corner. And if you would go back ot Bethel to-day, then say, and say it now,

> "Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;
> I want Thee forever to dwell in my soul;
> Break down every idol, cast out every foe,
> Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Third, *Change Your Garments.* The polluted one will no longer do. When Jacob got back to Bethel he built an altar there. An altar is a place of blessing, but it is a place of sacrifice as well, and I don't think we would go very far astray if we would see in this putting on of new garments the sign of a complete sanctification; and I use that word now in its original significance of that which is dedicated wholly to the will of God. This at least must be true when we say "Good-bye" to Shechem, for the place where the angels come and go.

And perhaps just here you have failed; what has seemed to be God's will you have not wanted for yourself and you said, "No," and God has been waiting all these months, maybe years, for you to say, "Yes." Say it to-day. Say it now—"Anything, any time, anywhere," and let God choose for you where you will go and how you will spend your life.

Put away the idols; be clean; change your garments, and go back to the place where God dwells.

The Lord said to Jacob (in substance) when he got there, "I am El Shaddai. I am God Almighty! I am God All-sufficient! You can reckon on me, Jacob, and I will make you fruitful and multiply you." Arise, and go back to Bethel, and see if God will not do that for you to-day.

VI.

BRINGING BACK THE KING

"Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?"—2 Samuel 19:10.

IT IS impossible for any one to read this portion of Second Samuel which deals with the rejection of King David and his coming again to the throne, and not see in it the typical history of another King whom the Scriptures call "The Son of David," and the prophecy concerning Him, which is yet to be fulfilled.

Among the sons of David there was one whose name was Absalom, the favorite of his father. Full of pride, ungrateful, headstrong, and wicked, he secretly resolved to usurp his father's throne. Certain conditions made the time especially ripe for the furthering of his unfilial and unholy scheme.

The great tribe of Judah had no doubt taken some offense at David's government. A merger had taken place which had placed the Ten Tribes on a footing of equality with themselves, and they were none too happy over it. And so, when the king's magnificent son came along with his smooth palaver of a more partial and liberal rule, the entire populace "fell" for it, like the foolish angels fell for the program of another usurper who conspired against the throne of the Eternal God Himself.

And then, you know, it was one of the chief duties of an oriental king to listen to the individual complaints of his people, and David, in the latter years of his reign, had neglected this. Of this thing Absalom took advantage. He stood in the gate of the city and conversed with every one who had a complaint, and sympathized with him, and "put

forth his hand," and kissed any man who came nigh to do him obeisance, and devoutly wished (out loud) that he were the king so that everyone who had a suit might have justice done to him.

And thus we are told that Absalom stole the hearts of the people.

This was all the easier because Absalom was a handsome fellow, and the people admired him because of his wonderfully luxuriant hair, and his personal beauty. Then again, he impressed the people by the imposing splendor in which he always moved about. "He prepared himself chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him," and thus, with his prancing steeds and his troup of glittering out-runners, he became the observed of all the observing in Jerusalem. And this the people would contrast with the plain and simple style of David's establishment. And so Absalom had them all coming his way.

And thus, when the hour struck, Absalom raised the standard of revolt at Hebron. It was completely successful. David fled from Jerusalem, and went to a city east of the Jordan.

Then came the counsel of Ahithophel, and, had Absalom followed it, and acted at once, he might have been still more successful. But the counsel of Hushai pleased him better.

Hushai told him to wait, to gather together a mighty army and ride forth at its head as became a great conqueror, and Absalom was fascinated by the brilliant imagination. Hushai appealed to his vanity.

And thus the Devil outwitted himself. He had nursed in Absalom an over-weening vanity and pride, intending by it to overthrow the throne of the Lord's anointed. And now this very thing became the cause of Absalom's downfall and ruin. How easily God makes the wrath of men to praise Him. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh."

And so, while Absalom waited, David rallied his forces and when they came to battle Absalom's army was utterly routed, and Absalom himself was among the slain.

For a time consternation reigned everywhere. One suggestion after another was offered, until finally in the midst of the confusion one clear voice rang out above the rest, "Now, therefore, why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?" And then the line of march was taken up, and back to Jerusalem, back to the palace, and back to the throne of David the people went.

Now, it has already been noted that this experience of King David looks down the ages to the world's rejection, and the final coming again to His throne, of another King.

Nothing is plainer than this, that Jesus was meant for a King. When He was born the angel said of Him, "And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever." But "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." He *was* a King, but not the kind they wanted.

They told Him to gird on His sword, but He said He preferred a Cross. They told Him to mount His charger and thunder at the gates of Rome, but He said He would win and rule the world by love. Such sentiment they could not tolerate and they drove Him away. Instead of a coronation they gave Him a crucifixion. And now, for two thousand years, the One who was meant for a King has been an exile from His dominion.

And where has He gone? Well, we are told in one of Luke's parables (Luke 19:12) the story of "a certain nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." That far country is "the land that is fairer than day," and standing there at the right hand of the throne of God, the rejected King is pleading the merits of His atoning work on the Cross for you and for me.

You know, they tell us the story of a soldier who had lost

both of his arms in battle and was, of course, maimed for life. His own brother, because of some misdemeanor, was arrested and sentenced to die. When every other means to save the condemned man's life had failed, this maimed and disabled soldier appeared before the king in his behalf and accomplished what every argument had failed to do. He made no eloquent speech, but simply held up his maimed arms before the king's eyes and said, "For the sake of these pardon my brother."

And so He, we are told, "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And the One who came to be a King, but whom the world despised, and who was "wounded for our transgressions," is now standing at the throne of God, and He lifts His hands that were pierced through by the nails, and bares His side that was thrust through by the spear, and says, "For the sake of these pardon my people and pass over their transgressions." Isn't it glorious to have a Saviour like that!

But the parable to which we referred says He has gone "to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." Thank God He is coming again. And when He comes He shall indeed have received the kingdom, and He shall be King of kings and Lord of lords, and sit upon the throne of David, and He shall reign forever, and of His kingdom and peace there shall be no end.

And God knows that this poor, tired, troubled, and sin-cursed world needs some one to do for it just what will be done when the King comes back.

1. Think what the coming back of the King will mean for the poor Jew. How the Jew needs Him! The Jew is a mighty character. He has given to the world many of its giants in every sphere of life. He sits in the council of kings and in the cabinet of presidents. He holds the purse-strings of the world. And yet the most pathetic page in human

history holds the story of the poor, dispersed, persecuted, and wandering Jew.

There has been no end of humanitarian schemes to ameliorate the condition of this unfortunate race of people. Jewish bankers have been lavish with their funds; land has been purchased; colonization schemes have been fostered; even the Parliament and the Congress of the world's two greatest nations have given sympathetic furtherance to the establishment of the Jews in the land which they feel is rightly their own. But "why speak ye not a word of bringing the King back?" For if I read my Bible aright there can be little, if any, hope for this dispersed and afflicted people until the King comes back in glory "to turn away ungodliness from Jacob." "For I will have mercy upon them, saith the Lord; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off."

2. Think what the coming back of the King will mean for the world itself! Surely the world needs Him!

Even the inanimate world and the dumb brutes are calling to be relieved from the curse of sin which is to be lifted when He comes.

Some one has said that the sounds of Nature are all in the minor key—the bleating of the sheep, and the moaning of the winds, the lowing of the cattle, and the murmur of the waves. But this is just what we are told in the Word of God—"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together," and then we are told that it is "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God,"—that is, deliverance on the morning of the First Resurrection.

With truer instinct than a careless, sleeping church Nature seems to know no other cure for her curse than the coming again of the King, and in that beautiful passage just quoted from Romans, out of which an artist might make a statue of Hope, she is pictured as watching with head raised, and neck out-stretched, toward some distant point in the heavens from which the Deliverer is to come.

But it is the world of humanity we have in mind. How it needs Him!

When I think of all the Church has done in her earnest desire to evangelize the world, and then face the painful fact that in all these two thousand years she has brought not more than one-tenth of the world's people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ; when I see the great apostasy going on to-day within the ranks of the church itself, and find so few of the church membership who are really spiritual Christians; when I look down the columns of the newspapers and see every page crimson with the history of the broken laws of God and man—I say, when I ponder these things I find myself crying, "Lord God, hasten the day of that mighty event when the King shall come back." For I record it as my conviction, with the record of twenty centuries behind me, and the Word of God open before me, that only the presence of the Son of God Himself, coming in power and great glory to bring this world into subjection to His authority, can ever stop the march of crime, or put a final check upon the sin and violence that threatens, even to-day, our boasted civilization with destruction, and usher in upon this earth the reign of universal peace we have sought so long, but in vain, to bring about.

I would to God that all the nations of the world might be brought into obedience to the Faith in this present age, if that were the will of God, but I do not read anywhere in Scripture that such is to be the case before the Lord returns. I think we will all agree in this, whatever distinctive view may be ours as to the time of that return.

And while I do not disparage Leagues of Nations, nor World Courts, nor the moral and social and political reforms, nor any of the other expedients for the bringing of deliverance to the nations of this earth, I cannot refrain from injecting into all this universal striving after human amelioration the question put to the Jewish people in the

time of their trouble and distraction, "Why speak ye not a word of bringing the King back?"

3. And then think what the bringing back of the King will mean for you and me!

There is, of course, a sense in which the King is here now. When by faith the sinner opens his heart to Jesus Christ he takes Him, not only as his Saviour from his sins, but as King, as Lord and Master of his life.

This being so, the doing of the will of one's Lord and King should be not only the governing principle, but the sweetest joy of every believer's life. Jesus said, "I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me." This is what some one has called "The Rule of the Royal Life." There is no other life that a child of God can live and find the real worth of knowing Christ. And because this is true it is a glorious thing just to have a chance to do the will of God, no matter what else it brings us, even though it be suffering and death.

When old John Brown of Osawatomie was captured Mr. Vallandigham said to him:

"Mr. Brown, who sent you here?"

And the old man looked up into Mr. Vallandigham's face and said with glorious composure:

"No man sent me here; it was the will of God and the prompting of my Maker."

And just a few days before they led him out to die upon the gallows he wrote that he was never more cheerful in all his life, and that he felt unworthy of the great distinction that was placed upon him in permitting him thus to die for so holy a cause.

Oh, my brother, there are other things we can do, and they will fill our lives with envy, with discord, and discontent. But there is a life of rest and sweetness unknown to the world that waits upon a willingness to do the will of God. And this day I call you to witness that in so far as

you have lived a life like this you have found the things which the world does not have and cannot give.

I shall never forget the sad look upon the face of a woman who had once given Jesus His rightful place in the throne-room of her life, who knew the sweet fellowship of walking daily with her Lord.

But she had gone away.

Her life had been thrown, through no choice of her own, among those who knew not God, and others who were nominally Christian only, and the pull of the world dragged her down. She tried in vain this way and that to assure herself that all was well, but she knew it was not well.

And she acknowledged to me her unrest and her spiritual poverty. She said, "When I think of my spiritual state a burden presses down like a millstone upon my soul. When I lie down it is with the thought always that if the night should usher me into the presence of God I would be unprepared."

My friend, is that you? Are you disappointed in what your profession has brought to you? Are you like the Galatians, "Having begun in the Spirit," are you trying to "perfect yourself in the flesh?" Have you tried in this way and that to find the life that is buoyant and free?

Why not let the King come back? Why not give Him the throne and let Him reign? Why not say, "Thy will be done in me?" In nothing else will that soul of yours or mine ever find rest.

"I have a Friend so precious,
  So very dear to me;
He loves me with a tender love,
  He loves so faithfully.
He leads me in the paths of light,
  Beneath a sunny sky,
And so we walk together,
  My Lord and I."

And that may be true of you. Do you want it to be? Then let your Lord, your Master, your King come back.

They tell us that one of the soldiers of Napoleon had been wounded by a bullet entering his breast just over his heart, and while they were probing for it, he cried, "An inch deeper, and you'll find the emperor!" He had his emperor, his king in his heart. Why not something like that with the King of kings and the Lord of lords?

But one day the King is coming back Himself to visibly live, and rule, and dwell forever with us. And think what that will mean!

That will be your coronation day, and mine—the time of reward. "Henceforth," says Paul, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

It will be the time when you meet your loved ones again, and I, mine. "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

It will be the time when pain and suffering and disease and death will be at an end forever for the child of God. "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

But it will be best of all just to have the King Himself. Mr. Wickersham, a noted Chautauqua lecturer, told us at Winona Lake that one time, after seven weeks of absence, he returned to his home in Des Moines one evening just in time for supper, and as they sat down he heard his little boy crying. The little fellow was up stairs in bed. They sent the nurse up but she came back and said she could not find out what was the matter. And the father said, "Here is some candy I bought for him; take this up to him." But that didn't satisfy him. He continued to cry, and the father said, "Here

are some toys I meant for Christmas Day to-morrow, but he might as well have them now." They took the toys up to the little fellow, but he did not care for them. Then Mr. Wickersham, the father, went up himself and said, "Jimmy, what is the matter?" And the little lad just reached out his arms and put them around his father's neck and said, "Papa, I just want you."

And so it is with Jesus. What a wonderful One He must be. He made the little children to love Him. He charmed the woman's heart until no ointment was too costly for His head. The bereaved found comfort, and the oppressed found refuge when He was near. Strong men laid their heads upon His bosom and were glad to die for Him. What a wonderful One He must be!

Oh, yes, I know His gifts have been precious and plentiful—the gifts of His grace and His glory, which ever since He went away He has been shedding forth from His place at the right hand of His Father's throne. But how wonderful it would be just to have Him! And if any word of mine could bring Him back I would say, "Even now, come, Lord Jesus." Not another instant on the dial of my watch would I wait. My Lord! My King! I want Him to come. I wish He would come just now. "Why speak ye not a word of bringing the King back?"

And what can we do to bring Him back?

Well, what did Peter mean when he said, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things."

Out of the nations of the world—out of the Gentiles and out of the Jews—Jesus is gathering a people for Himself—His Church; His Bride; His Body; and when that Body is complete He will come. And the one thing—the only thing

—we can do to hasten that day is to help Him fill out that number which is to make up that Body and that Bride complete.

Who can tell when it will be? Who knows but that the next one to accept Christ, the next one to receive the Son of God, may be the last one; and then the numbering will be finished, and He will come! "Then look up, and lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh."

It is said of Queen Victoria that, after hearing one of her chaplains preach at Windsor on the Return of the Lord, she spoke to Dean Farrar about it, and said:

"Oh, how I wish that the Lord would come during my lifetime!"

"And why does your majesty feel this way about it?" asked the great preacher.

And with her countenance illumined with deep emotion the Queen replied, "Because I should so love to lay my crown at His feet."

"Now, therefore, why speak ye not a word of bringing the King back?" Yes, He is coming again.

If you have ever heard a rendition of the Oratorio "Messiah" by a well-trained chorus, and most of you have, can you ever forget the thrill and the uplift of it all? Such artists as Adelina Patti and Evan Williams and David Bispham and Carey, each supported by hundreds of trained musicians, used to take the principal parts, and it was marvelous indeed.

You know just before the Hallelujah Chorus a death-like stillness holds the throng in a few seconds of suspense. And then the deep bass rolls out, "For He shall reign forever and ever"; and then the alto lifts it higher, "For He shall reign forever and ever"; and then the tenors pick it up and lift it, as it were, to the very skies, "For He shall reign forever and ever"; and then the sopranos, as if inspired, sing out, "King of kings, and Lord of lords"; and then, as if from the four quarters of creation, there comes the anxious question, "How

long shall He reign?" with one accord they make reply, "Forever and forever"; and then, as if heaven and earth were joining in triumphant shout, the whole choir with mighty volume sings, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!"

Oh, it seems to me like a prophecy of the glad day when every knee shall bow, and all the nations of the earth shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And from the teeming millions of Asia shall sound the anthem, "King of kings, and Lord of lords"; and the shout of Europe will give it power; and the deep undertone of Africa redeemed will lend it volume; and America, and far-away Australia, and the islands of the sea will join the refrain and pour their matchless music into the ear of Christ, and together, from the uttermost parts of the earth, breaking out in triumphant voice, the whole world shall sing, "King of kings, and Lord of lords; the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

VII.

A CONDEMNING QUESTION

"Lord, is it I?"—Matthew 26:22.

WILL DURANT, in his "Story of Philosophy," says the philosophy of Socrates may be summed up in the one sentence, "Know thyself," the sentence that made that great soul famous, or helped to do it, at least.

It seems to me that a thing like that is an easier thing to do in a philosophical sense than it is in a religious one. I am not sure that I understand exactly what it means in the former sense, but the hard thing about it in a religious sense is not the understanding of it, but the doing of it.

It is not easy to know yourself religiously. I am thinking of religion now as a life, of course, and not a creed. We must have a creed. According to my opinion it is the creed, very largely, that makes the life. If I had to pass the night with a man who boasted that he had no creed, I would sleep with my pocket-book under my pillow. I like for a man at least to believe in something.

I met a fellow the other day; he seemed to be suffering from an acute attack of chronic verbosity. Instead of "a great fire" it was "a disastrous conflagration"; if he wanted to say, "The fire spread," he would have to say, "The devouring element extended its devastating career"; and if he meant, "The man died," he couldn't get away with anything short of, "His spirit quitted its earthly habitation and winged its way into the dim unknown." He began to talk to me about Evolution, and he called it "a change from an indefinite homogeneity into a definite heterogeneity through differentiating processes," *et cetera;* I knew he had been reading

Spencer, or more likely had gotten his definition second-handed, and I stopped him long enough to ask him in a very polite way, if he had any religion, and then he told me that he believed in religion all right, but he said it was a "Creed-less religion." Just what these Bible critics mean by a "Creed-less religion," I don't know, and wonder if they do. A religion without a creed is like a ship without a rudder; it is like an organization without a constitution and by-laws. There is no telling where the one is going or what the other is going to do.

But it ought not to be especially hard to know oneself religiously so far as one's creed is concerned. Every man, says Paul, ought to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him. But one's religious life is another thing, and here is where the uncertainty comes in. One can never tell just how he is going to come through. This is what we meant by saying it is not an easy thing to know yourself religiously. Man in this respect is a mystery to himself, and the man who knows himself best is the readiest man to acknowledge it.

Now let us look at the text and the occasion that produced it.

Jesus did not die an accidental, uncalculated death. He was born for Calvary, and He knew it. But how little the disciples understood! From the day He called them from their nets till the day they gathered in the gloom of His crucifixion Jesus was constantly throwing across their fond anticipations of an earthly kingdom the shadow of His Cross. But they never fully understood. Asked even in the upper room the meaning of it all the disciples who knew Him best would be silent.

But they knew at least, in the upper room, that He was about to die. It was the last hour of calm before the gathering storm broke loose. No man ever loved or craved the love of others as Jesus did; and now just before He faced the fury of His enemies' hate He would be alone for a while

with His dearest friends. It was a precious hour. They would recall the manner of His life; His wonderful disposition, His humility, His self-denial, His sacrifice for others, and now misunderstood, mistreated, "despised and rejected of men," He was about to die. He said it was for them, and for all the world, and they loved Him for it. We do not know all that was said in that quiet retreat, but we know enough. Surely then, if ever, the disciples must have felt as we sometimes sing, "If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."

Is it possible that any one could be untrue to such an One as Jesus?

> "Ashamed of Jesus, can it be,
> A mortal man ashamed of Thee?"

Lord, it is possible that it may be *I*?

There was a troubled look on the face of Jesus, and I can almost hear Peter say to John, "John, look at the Master's face; He is worried. We know He is not afraid to die. Ask Him what is the matter." Whether the question was put or not I do not know, but they were not kept waiting long until they learned that it was not about Himself that He was concerned—"The Son of man goeth even as it is written of him," He said—but it was the awful abyss into which He knew that one of His disciples was about to plunge himself that filled His soul with horror.

And He said, "Verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray me!" Oh, Judas, son of Iscariot, can you ever forget the face of the Son of God as He said it? Why didn't you throw yourself at His feet and ask Him to save you from the awful thing you had in your heart to do?

The startling announcement was made just before the supper. What Jesus was about to say to His disciples was too sacred for a traitor's ears to hear. He knew that Judas could have no sympathy with it. He knew that Judas' heart was utterly hard, and He wanted to rid Himself and His disciples of his presence.

Why, then, did the Master couch His purpose in such ambiguous language? Why did he not expose the traitor at once? Why didn't He say, "Judas, I chose twelve, but one is a devil, and you are that one? You have eaten bread with me but you have lifted up your heel against me. Now go, and what you do, do quickly." I think the reason is twofold:

1. He wanted to give Judas a last chance to repent.

It *was* necessary that the Son of God should suffer and die for the sins of the world, but there was nothing to compel Judas to be a link in the chain of events that brought it about. It was not too late for Judas to be saved.

Listen to me. Maybe if I would tell you some of the soul-tragedies that have been brought to me in confidence you wouldn't wonder that I pause a bit just here. My brother, have you thought to do a certain thing because the pull is hard upon you? It was fifteen dollars for Judas, and no matter what it is for you, it's remorse, and self-reproach, and the accusing finger of an outraged conscience in the end. Judas will never be free from the clinking of the thirty pieces of silver.

You remember when the Lord, with a look of unutterable pity, whispered to Judas, "Thou hast said," the traitor went out and the record says, "And it was night." Oh, Judas, son of Iscariot, what a night! Darkness without and hell within! Listen, my brother, have you reached the rapids? Are you about to go over the falls? There's a mighty hand reaching down for you. Take it, and He, the mighty Son of God, your Saviour if you'll let Him be, will lift you up, and out, and back from the blackness of the depths forever.

No, it was not too late for Judas, and had he even at that late hour confessed his guilt instead of saying, as he did, with despicable hypocrisy, "Master, is it I?" and had he fallen at the feet of the Master and cried out of a broken, penitent heart, "Lord, it *is* I," it would not have been too late, for He,

who never turned a penitent away, would have taken him back, forgiven his sin, and restored him as before.

But Judas did not seem to care. Then came a warning of the black and awful ruin into which the unhappy traitor was throwing himself. "Woe unto that man," said Jesus, "by whom the Son of man is betrayed; it had been good for that man if he had not been born!" But the conscience of Judas was seared as with a hot iron, and his heart, it would seem, was as hard as a nether millstone, and he was not moved.

Still another chance. Perhaps the memory of his Master's love would bring him back. I think this is the meaning of the sop that Jesus gave to Judas. This was not a sign merely to point him out, but to remind him of love's other and happier days. "Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread," as Judas well knew the Psalmist put it, "hath lifted up his heel against me." But Judas was dead to love, and, realizing there was no hope, the Master told him to depart, and to do quickly what he had in his heart to do.

2. But the second purpose of the ambiguous language used by the Master was that the other disciples might have a heart-searching of their own.

The awful remark was so general that it might have applied to any of them and they did well in this, that each one of them did not begin to distrust the other, but himself. They thought of their strife at the beginning of the feast, of their want of nobility, of their selfishness and their sin, and as another said, "Every evil thought they ever thought, every evil word they ever said, every evil thing they ever did all crowded upon their memories and made conscience afraid," and the thing, of which I beg you to-day to think seriously, became for the moment a startling experience of their own. For each one became dimly aware of the hidden and hideous possibility of such a sin, and with an anxious

tone of self-distrusting love said, "Lord, is it possible that it can be I?"

We are getting back now to the place where we started. "Know thyself." We said it was not so easy to do, religiously. Sin is an awful thing. It has the hiss of the serpent in the very sound of the word. And we scarcely know what possibilities of this kind lie coiled and sleeping in the unsuspecting heart. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?"

Vesuvius was quiet for centuries, and trees grew and cattle fed in its crater, and who knows of the combustibles in the depth of his own heart which a spark from hell may one day set ablaze. "Lord, is it I?" "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

John G. Woolley, that great soul whom I had the privilege of calling my friend, in speaking of the terrible beast of appetite, said in one of his addresses, "I shall never drink again; but one night when I was in a New England train, and very ill, I met a stranger, who pitied me and gave me a quick, powerful drug out of a small vial, and my pain was gone in a minute or two—but alcohol was licking up my blood with tongues of flame!

"I should have gotten drunk that night if I could. I thought of everything—of my two years of clean life; of the meeting I was going to, vouched for by my friend and brother, D. L. Moody; of the bright little home in New York; of Mary and the boys. I tried to pray and my lips framed oaths. I reached up for God, and He was gone; and the fiercest fiend of hell had me by the throat, and shouted, 'Drink, drink, drink!'

"It was not yet daylight Sunday morning, when I stood on the platform at Pawtucket, Rhode Island, alone. I flew from saloon to saloon; they were closed; so were the drug stores; and all that day, locked in my room at the hotel, I fought my fight, and won in the evening by the grace of God.

But the people of Pawtucket never knew that the man who spoke to them that night had been in hell all day."

"Lord, is it I?" Sin of every kind is a beast. And I am reminded of the story told of a man who owned a pet tiger. It was remarkably tame and apparently harmless. But one day, while being fondled, the beast good-naturedly licked its master's hand until its rough tongue drew blood through the pores of the skin. At the first taste of blood the animal grew wild; its old nature, so long subdued, was aroused and the savage brute sprang upon its master and tore him to pieces.

Have you ever had anything of an experience like that? I think you will have to judge the possibilities of the future by the actualities of the past. If, in obedience to a heart deceitful above all things, inclined to do evil, the pure white of your soul has been sullied by that which is unchaste and unclean, and if you have thought things, and said things, and done things for which, in the presence of the white light of the throne of God, you know you would blush and be ashamed, then remember it is possible for all this to happen again. "Lord, is it I?"

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman tells of a member of his church who one day came into his room with the evidence of a terrible struggle written all over his face. He had been absent from the city for several weeks. He came very close to the good doctor and said, "When I first saw you I told you the reason I could not be a Christian was found in the fact that I was an infidel, and this was partly true. My father was an infidel and my grandfather before him, and the blood of infidelity courses in my veins; but somehow I got over that. But when I joined the church I hardly felt that I was a Christian, for there was one sin I would not give up. My wife did not know about it; the best friend I had in the world was ignorant of it. I said, 'I can serve God and continue in this sin, and still be saved.' But I found that I could not do it. The other night on my knees I asked God

to take it away, even if it took my life; and for all of these days I have been free! The peace of God has filled my very soul, and I have never been so happy."

And then, coming still nearer, he bent down and whispered the word, and that word was: *Morphine.*

That was his sin. Dare I put this question: What is yours? Listen to these confessions:

A child of God, who was a one-time degenerate, said, "Lust? Why, you do not know what lust is! In one minute lust, working on my diseased imagination, turned the whole world of virtue into hell and turned me into a demon."

"My trouble," said another, "is not so much to keep myself from breaking over into open sin as it is just to control my thoughts. Like the people back in Noah's day, "every imagination of the heart is only evil continually," and I am forever dreaming of a sin I would not, if I know myself, for the world commit. But I know that "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he"; and I want something better." "Lord, is it I?"

And yet another said, "It is my temper." What an offense to God a wicked temper must be. There are church-members who will bear the loss of all their property, and even of a child, with a fortitude that is heroic, but who, at the breaking of a dish, or the blunder of a servant, or some act of disobedience on the part of a child, or a hasty word from some other quarter, or the least disturbance of any kind, are like a sheet-iron stove full of shavings—the spark, and they are red-hot in a minute.

They are like John Lilburne. Cromwell said that he had such a temper that if he could find no one else to quarrel with, John would quarrel with Lilburne, and Lilburne with John. "Lord, is it I?"

I once found a woman in great distress of soul. She had been trying to get hold of God, that she might hear His voice and get His help, but she couldn't do it. There was

something between them and God seemed to be far away, and when I asked her what it was she said, "I hate a woman, a member of my own church, and I hate her with such a hatred that it has mastered me." How could God speak to a woman with a heart and soul in her like that? "Lord, is it I?"

And then think of the Sabbath desecration and the worldliness of so-called Christian people in general. No wonder the Church is going on crutches. No wonder, with the world boring its way like a putrefying abscess into her very vitals, the very life of the Church is being threatened.

I know there are exceptions—thank God, not a few of them—but in uncounted thousands of our churches, which in other days abounded with life, the worship of God is honored, or rather dishonored, with such scant attendance that we little wonder at the discouraged pastor, while Sunday golf, and Sunday movies, and Sunday evening dinners, and bridge parties, and even dances are all the vogue.

And members who attend divine worship in the morning, if the midnight dissipation of the night before does not keep them abed all forenoon, and from whom the pastor has every right under heaven to expect better things, will give themselves to this sort of deportment with little if any compunction of conscience. And these extremes of worldly indulgence, we are sorry to say, like some great devilfish of the underworld, have caught in their selfish, self-gratifying, godless grip thousands of our one time best church-members and Christians, members of the church, who twenty-five years ago would sooner have died than do some of the things on the Lord's day, or even a week-day, that some of you may be doing now. "Lord, is it I?"

What are we going to do about it? We'll have to do just what Judas ought to have done. Get right in the heart. We'll have to pray with the Psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." And until this takes place, "Let him that thinketh he standeth

take heed lest he fall," and even then let him walk circumspectly before the Lord. The wise man said in one of his proverbs (Prov. 4:23), "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." The Revised Version puts it, "Keep thy heart above all things that thou keepest."

The story is told of an old colored fellow who came to a watchmaker and gave him the hands of a clock and said:

"I want yo to fix dese han's. Dey jes doan keep no more kerrec time for mo' an six months now."

"Where is the clock?" said the watchmaker.

"I done lef de clock in de cabin."

"But I must have the clock."

"No, dar's nuffin de matter wid de clock ceptin de han's," said the old colored man.

And the watchmaker failed to convince him. He said:

"You jes want de clock to tinker wif so you can charge me a big price. Gimme back dem han's."

But the old colored fellow was not one whit more foolish than many other folks who think they can regulate their lives without being made right on the inside. And the colored man's reason, by the way, for not surrendering the clock is not very unlike the reason why some people are not willing to put themselves in the hands of the Lord—*they are afraid of the price!* But until you have done what Judas should have done, and have thrown yourself on the Lord, not alone for the pardon He so freely gives, but for the strength you need, you may expect to go down when the storms of temptation beat upon you. In your own strength there is nothing but defeat, but "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Do you remember the story of the poisoned robe of Hercules? Dejanira, jealous of Iole, gave it to him, and when he put it on, as soon as it became warm the poison entered his flesh. He tried to tear the fatal garment off, but it stuck to his flesh and tore away huge pieces from his body, and, strong man that he was, he had to die.

Where is the man who has known nothing of the law in his members warring against the law that makes for righteousness; that law that assails us always at our weakest point, and when we would do good, comes with all its desperate and deadly temptation and sweeps us away in the fierce storm of our unrestrained passion? Many a man, strong in a hundred other ways, loses thus the one decisive battle that would have redeemed his whole life. But there is victory. Hercules had to die, but listen, "Oh, wretched man that I am!" says Paul, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." "*Lord, is it I?*"

Somewhere, some time ago, I read an article entitled, "The Outcry of God's Heart." It was something like this:

"Adam, where art thou?"

"I am hiding amongst the trees. I am naked, ashamed, and afraid. I don't want to see You."

"Adam, where art thou?"

"I am hiding amongst my ledgers and bank books, my stocks and bonds. I must attend to my business, and I have no time for You."

"Adam, where art thou?"

"I am hiding in the theater, amongst my fellow fools and slaves of lustful desires. Do not bother me, for I must complete my course in the school of lust and demoralization and crime."

"Adam, where art thou?"

"I am hiding amongst the fascinated fools of the gambling hell. Don't interfere with me. I must win, even though my soul be at stake, and hell my portion."

"Adam, where art thou?"

"I am in the pool room, in the high school of idlers, loafers, moral waifs, and time-killers. I am having a gay time. Let me alone."

"Adam, where art thou?"

"I am on the dance floor, whirling amidst gay pairs of lust-inflamed men and women, trampling virtues and decencies under my feet. Don't interfere. On with the dance, though the floor slopes toward the brothel and the gates of hell."

"Adam, where art thou?"

"LORD, IS IT I?"

"Adam, where art thou?"

"I was once, O Lord, in Thy garden of delights. I walked and talked with Thee in the cool of the day. My heart was filled with the joy of Thy presence. Now it is an aching void. I come back, O Lord, seeking Thy face, confessing my backsliding and my sin. Have mercy upon me, O God."

"Adam, where art thou?"

"Here I am at Thy feet, O Lord, lost and undone without Thy pardoning mercy and Thy renewing grace. I accept Thine offered forgiveness. Strengthen me by Thy Spirit, and I will do Thy will, O God."

> "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
> Prone to leave the God I love:
> Here's my heart, O take and seal it;
> Seal it for Thy courts above."

God grant that you may say this, and say it now.

"LORD, IS IT I?"

VIII.

"SEARCH ME, O GOD!"

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—Psalms 139:23,24.

DAVID never penned a more magnificent Psalm than the one we know as the 139th. None of us could have written it, but there is not one of us who does not know and, let it be hoped, does not willingly acknowledge the need of just such an experience as was going on in the soul of the one who did write it.

No one but a sincere child of God would make a prayer like that. It is prompted by a desire for a cleansing from sin that is thorough and complete. It is a recognition on David's part that even after the grosser sins of a man's life have been put away there may remain still undetected evil, and things lurking within that mar and spoil the beauty of the soul.

One of the most amusing of the myths is the story of how King Midas got his asses ears.

Pan, the god of the fields, had the temerity to compare his music with that of Apollo and to challenge the god of the lyre to a trial of skill. Pan blew on his pipes and with his rustic music greatly pleased himself and his faithful follower, King Midas, who happened to be present. Then Apollo struck the strings of his lyre with such ravishing harmony that at once Tmolus, the judge, awarded him the victory.

The decision pleased all present but King Midas who questioned the justice of the award. Apollo felt the insult keenly and declared that such a depraved pair of ears should

no longer remain in human form, and so he caused the ears of King Midas to grow hairy and become in length and shape like those of an ass.

King Midas attempted to hide his misfortune with a heavy growth of hair, and so far succeeded that no one knew of his deformity but his barber whom he bound to silence by great promises and by threats of dire punishment.

The barber, however, found it too much to keep such a secret. So he dug a small hole in the gorund, whispered the story into the earth and covered it up. Then up from the spot there grew a thick bed of hollow reeds and with every breeze that blew they whispered the words, "King Midas has asses' ears."

How often our spiritual deformity is hidden from the eyes of the world. As a rule the world esteems us better than we know ourselves to be. But we must not think our ways are so secret and concealed that there is no one to know and censure them. Your secret deeds—God's eye is there to see; your words—He knows them every one while they are yet on your tongue; your thoughts—as David says, God "knows them afar off."

The X-ray, discovered some time ago in a German laboratory, is a truly marvelous thing. It photographs coin through the thick envelope of a man's purse. It lays bare the bones of a man's hand behind the flesh. It locates a long-lost bullet in a man's body. It outlines a man's internal organs and reveals the hidden things of his anatomy as clearly as the face of a clock reveals the time of day. Something like that, though many times more minute and accurate, is the penetrating inspection of the divine X-ray which God is forever turning upon a man's spiritual anatomy, which is forever beyond the reach of any searchlight or X-ray that science can ever hope to discover.

And now I want to ask you a question. Are you glad to know that God knows all about you? If the X-ray could

go on and read, and the camera record, every jealous and uncharitable and unchristian and unclean thing about us and set it forth for the gaze of man I wonder if we would not give a very wide berth to such an unobliging instrument and keep away from it just as far as we possibly could. There is not one of us who would be willing to lay open his innermost heart to the gaze of his dearest friend. Yet we must not forget that God knows all about it.

Again I ask you, Are you glad that this is so? David was, because his whole heart was set on being right with God. And if your heart and mine are only set with a similar purpose, as they ought to be, we too will welcome this searching diagnosis, because with it God is always the remedy; and we can walk with Him as He leads us "in the way everlasting," because there will have come an answer to that prayer we pray when we sing,

> "Give me a heart like Thine,
> By thy wonderful power;
> By Thy grace every hour;
> Give me a heart like Thine."

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Now there are two things it will pay us well to think about as we consider this text:

1. *The Need of Being Searched.* "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Jeremiah says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," and we need some one who knows it better than we do to search it, and cleanse it, and control it. Did you ever go on a tour of inspection with God through your own heart? If you ever do, you will never forget the journey. Why not take that journey to-day, just now, my brother? He holds the searchlight and as He finds this thing and that He asks us why it is there.

Just over at this place there is yet a bit of unbelief. The Word says thus and thus, but you are not quite willing to have it so. And just here the all-revealing light uncovers a bit of pride, a selfish ambition, a bit of jealousy because of another's success, a bit of rebellion against what seems to be the will of God. And over there, skulking down in the darkest, foulest recess of them all, as if determined not to be revealed, is a beastly thing, and as the Lord floods the place with light I can hear Him sadly ask, "Why is this here?" It is the impure thought, the unlawful sexual desire, the thing I have struggled with so long and so hard, the thing that I have mastered a thousand times, only a thousand other times to be mastered by it. And the divine Searcher says, "My child, this, too, must go out forever."

I remember that some time ago, while I was conducting an evangelistic meeting in a huge tent, a storm came and blew the tent down. Driving out in the country the next day with a friend we saw a mighty monarch of the forest lying prostrate on the ground, and my friend said, "No wonder the tent went down when a tree like that had to give up." But our surprise vanished when we came up and read the story of its downfall. It had been a magnificent tree, once tall and beautiful and strong—a mighty oak. The storms had blown as if they would overturn it; the sun had blazed as if it would burn up its foliage; the rains had poured as if they would drown it; the snows had piled up as if they would freeze it, but the old tree had laughed at their puny efforts and grew on and prospered. But on this occasion, when the storm came, not as fierce as many it had met before, the defiant giant went down with a crash. And when we came up we discovered that the huge trunk was all hollow and that for many years it had been scarcely more than a rim of a tree. The rest of the story is very brief. One fateful day a little worm had eaten its way into the heart of the tree, laid its eggs there and died. Soon there were

a dozen worms and from these came many more, and soon there were hundreds of worms feeding upon the heart of the tree until they had eaten away nearly all its life, and left it an easy prey to the storms that blew about it.

The application is easy. God help each one of us to make it for himself. Sometimes a man's life goes down with a crash, and it is sad enough, God knows, for a whole life to be ruined and blasted by a single episode, by the storm of some one temptation that overtakes him and so sweeps round about him as to cause his feet to go out from under him. And we pity the man, and sometimes find ourselves disposed to think it a bit too hard for him to be judged and crippled all the rest of his life because of the single action of an evil moment.

But we must remember this. It is not for the single act alone that we are judged. The crash comes as the result of a long process in which the mind continually indulged itself in the sweets of that forbidden thing, and we are judged both for the act and the process that led to it. Let us have a care, for it is a difficult thing to entertain such things in the heart and not learn, to our sorrow, that in some way they will find issue in the life.

This has ever been, I take it, our most serious trouble. But we must come to know—indeed we do know—but we must not forget—we must have the truth ever in mind that such evil imaginings of the heart are wrong in themselves—hateful in the sight of the all-pure eyes of God, even though they do not issue in the way we have just described. There are those who would not dare to act impurely, who would fight with every God-given power in their possession against it, but who seem to think that they may indulge the thought of that which is unholy, and yet be innocent of anything wrong in the sight of God.

But certainly we know that this cannot be so. That unholy imagination is a spark from hell, and it turns the

whole world of virtue into a hell; and with it, if it be entertained and indulged and rolled over and over in the mind like a sweet morsel under the tongue, the whole fabric of Christian character, together with the smile of God, goes down with a crash as the result.

But, oh, my brother, child of the Almighty, there was no salvation for the tree. *There is for you.*

2. *The Result of Searching.* This brings us to the other part of the text, "Lead me in the way everlasting." This is the outcome of the kind of searching God does, the blessing that goes with it. The "way everlasting" is the way that leads to everlasting life, and to be led in all the things that make for such a life—this is the joy and the privilege of the one who is searched and tried as David prayed he might be. It means therefore *cleansing, guidance,* and *glory.*

1. The first thing is *cleansing.* One cannot walk in the "way everlasting," of course, and take his sin with him as he goes. And this is what we meant when we said there was no hope for the tree, but there is for you.

There is a legend which the ancient Jews used to tell about the Prophet Ezekiel, how that he once raised a number of his countrymen from the dead. But the miracle was so far imperfect that the garments of the resurrected men ever after retained the smell of the sepulchre and their faces the complexion of corpses. And there are those who seem to think that it is after this fashion that the Lord Jesus raises us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness in Him, and that so far as life in this world is concerned we must not expect to be rid of the blemishes and the scent of moral corruption.

But what a mistake is this. We have not so learned Christ. There is such a thing, as Peter says, as being "kept by the power of God through faith," and we believe in His purpose to cleanse us from every defilement, and in His

ability to do it, and to keep us in perfect purity of flesh and spirit.

2. The second thing is *guidance*. It is possible to know the will of God, and when the heart is right we will not be at a loss to know which way to go. That is what I read in Proverbs, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

Dr. Arthur T. Pierson once found himself in the study of George Müller and thought he would look into that great man's Bible. He came to the verse in Proverbs where it says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by Jehovah," and George Müller had written by the side of it, on the margin of his Bible, "and the stops too."

The Lord said to the children of Israel, "Go up," and again He said, "Go not up." And to have His voice whispering to me at the fork in the road, and when sometimes there seems to be no road at all, this is my privilege, and it is yours, if one's heart keeps right in the sight of God.

It may be only a step at a time, but that is enough:

> "Lord, for tomorrow and its needs
> I do not pray;
> Love me, keep me, guide me,
> Just for today."

There was a queer-shaped, ugly old tug running between London and Portsmouth. They called her "Old-Bust-Me-Up." She never came into port that she did not collide with some other vessel and do a lot of damage. And that's the way she got her name. But one day, to everybody's amazement, she came in straight as a die and glided gracefully to her place alongside the dock, and a sailor standing on the wharf couldn't help shouting, "Hello, what's happened to you, Old-Bust-Me-Up?" and an old sailor on board shouted back, "Got a new skipper aboard." That was the secret of the change. And when Christ becomes our Captain and our Pilot He changes our lives and controls them; guides

us safely by His hand and leads us "in the way everlasting," the end of which is the heavenly port.

3. And this is the last thought. The third thing is *glory*, and the "way everlasting" leads to it. Heaven will be full of glory, but the best of it all will be just to see Him:

> "For when by His grace
> I shall look on His face,
> That will be glory for me."

And what was it the poet said?

> "For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
> The flood may bear me far,
> I hope to see my Pilot face to face
> When I have crossed the bar."

But I shall see Him not only as my Pilot and my Guide, but as my Redeemer, and I know I shall look a long time at Him before I shall have eyes for anybody else.

They tell us of a man whose blind eyes had been successfully operated on by a noted surgeon. The nurse had been instructed to remove the bandage on a certain day, but no sooner had she loosed it slightly than the man clasped both hands over it and cried out,

"Go for the surgeon; I will not have it removed until he comes!"

The surgeon came and said, "What is the matter? Is it a failure?"

"No," cried the man, "it is a success!"

"Then why did you send for me? The nurse could have removed the bandage just as well as I."

"Yes," said the grateful man, "but just as soon as I caught a gleam of light and knew that I could see I wanted the first object upon which my eyes should rest to be the face of the man who gave them back to me."

And like that I know I shall feel when I come to the end of "the way everlasting." And if this is what His searching

means—*cleansing; guidance; glory*—who is there of us who will not gladly say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"?

On the night before the Passover, when the house of every obedient Jew was searched for leaven, and when the search had been carefully made and every bit of leaven put away, the faithful Jew would say, "And now if there be any leaven in this house, it is here against my will." And may this be true of you and me. Leaven, you know, was a symbol of sin. Search me, O God!

IX

KEEPER OF THE VINEYARD

"They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."—Song of Solomon 1:6.

THIS is one of the startling texts of the Bible—one of the texts that we feel we would have written in italics if it had been ours to record. At any rate, when once you have heard it, it is hard to forget.

Whatever your interpretation of Solomon's Song may be, whether you think here of the individual believer as speaking, or of the Church—the bride of Christ—the text is the confession of one who has failed in the matter of a duty sacred above all others, the duty of guarding and caring for one's own life.

For some reason, the speaker's angry brothers had compelled her to be the caretaker of the vineyards. Her duty in this connection she performed all faithfully enough. At least there is no intimation to the contrary in the text. But her own vineyard she did not keep.

She had pruned the vines of these other vineyards, but kept the evil thing to live in her own heart. She had pulled the weeds and watered the growth where seemingly the will of God had placed her. But the holy aspiration of her own being she had allowed the thorns and briars of the world to choke, and her own spirit she had left unnourished. She had mended the walls to keep the marauding beasts away, but "the little foxes that spoil the vines" she had permitted in the sacred precincts of her own soul to wander at will. "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

It is one of those texts in the presence of which you are inclined, whether you will or not, to become serious, for it carries with it a bit of the judgment day and makes us to remember that we shall be judged, not alone because of what we are to others, but for our own lives, and that God will deal with us in that day not on the ground of what others think we are, but on the ground of what we, as well as God, know ourselves to be. "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

There are only three questions to ask in connection with this text. First, How does it come that I am placed in charge of these vineyards? Second, What are these other vineyards which I am supposed to keep? Third, What is my own vineyard?

In answering the first question, it is interesting to note that the one from whose lips our text is taken was not altogether happy in caring for the vineyards of which she had been made the keeper. She said, "My mother's children—my brothers—were angry with me and made me the drudge of the family." She rather complained of the duty that seemed to have been thrust upon her and gave herself to it in a rather perfunctory sort of way.

And so it is that sometimes we believe our lot to have been shaped by cruel circumstances and we chafe a bit under conditions that would be altered somewhat, perhaps, if it were ours to have our own way. At least, so we think. But if we would only stop and realize that these vineyards are of God's choosing for us!

Something ought to be said just here, and it is this: There is such a thing as divine government of human life. Do you recall what God said to Israel in Horeb? A whole year they had been there, when God said, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this place." Howsoever disposed, it was for them not to ask the reason why, but to up and strike tents immediately and be on the march. I know it's a bit disturb-

ing at times, but our wills are ours to make them His, and when He chooses for us, there is no devotion quite so thrilling, no heroism quite so sublime, no sight quite so full of inspiration as that of a child of God forging ahead in what he believes is God's way for him. You know the old story about Luther, when he was warned against going to Worms. He said, "Though every slate on every house were a devil I would go." And that is the spirit which has brought men into places of heroism and victory.

Have you sailed across the sea? Then listen:

> "Back flies the foam; the hoisted flag streams back;
> The long smoke wavers on the backward track;
> Back fly with the wind things that the wind obey;
> The strong ship follows its appointed way."

God does choose for us where we are to go and what we are to do; and if you have been obedient to Him you will be happy in spite of hardship and you will experience peace and blessing because you realize that in the perfecting of God's plans it is essential that you be where you are and be doing the work that you are sure He would have you do. The very difficulties about you under such circumstances, like the stones in Jacob's ladder, become rungs upon which you climb up into heavenly places.

A woman wrote me a short while ago and said, "Tell me the story of Happy Hallock. I want it for my Sunday-school class." She had heard me give it in an address and wanted her memory refreshed. And this is what I told her:

Among my seminary mates was a young fellow by the name of Hallock. He was keen-witted, had an intellect of no mean caliber and was one of the most earnest Christians in the whole institution. He was such a good-natured chap, and apparently so light-hearted, that we always called him "Happy Hallock," and "Happy" for short. Graduation came, and "Happy" chose the foreign field. A little later he wrote

the board that he believed God would have him support himself, and his allowance could go to others. This he did by publishing an almanac. He gave the proceeds of its sale to the work and cared for himself through the advertising he could get for it. I went over to China recently and found him in Shanghai. He took me down through the squalid parts of the city and showed me his charges. All the Chinese children seemed to know him and the mothers would smile as they saw him come. We climbed the rear stairway of a church building and went into his rooms—notice, I say rooms! He had two—one for his study and a small place to sleep. There was no carpet on the floor and I could tell that no woman's hands had ever busied themselves with the appearance of the place. I had seen his work, and the place where he stayed—for you could not call it a home. On the desk were some ponderous volumes,—for he has put the church under lasting obligation to him by reason of his monumental labors in bringing forth a concordance of the Bible in the Chinese language.

I think I must have forgotten myself for a moment; for as I thought of this friend of mine, this man with a university degree, and contrasted him with others whom I knew in this land, I must have shown that I was disposed to pity him a bit, for, with a shining face, he said, "I would rather preach the gospel here than anywhere else in all the world, because I believe He wishes it."

The day came when my ship was to sail and carry me back to home and friends and comfort. It was in the evening, toward dusk. Many people were crowding the docks to wave their friends "good-bye." "Happy" had come clear out to the end of the dock and stood alone against the crowd, the darkening skies and the silhouetted buildings in the distance. The boat was starting away when "Happy's" voice rose clear above the hum of all the rest of the general con-

fusion of the dock. "Rah-rah-rah, tiger-tiger-tiger, siss-boom-ah—Biederwolf!"

It was the old college yell, and "Happy's" heart was as young and buoyant as ever. I returned the salute, and every moment the boat was widening the distance between us, and my eyes filled with tears as I saw his form fade away in the distant darkness. He went back to his room so unlike your own, and back to his labor of love among the Chinese in their squalid homes, and I came back to America. But I said then and I have said a thousand times since, every time I think of "Happy" Hallock," "there are heroes still in the world," and then I ask God once more to give me such measure of His Spirit as would cause me to choose rather to live and work in the midst of hardship with Him, than to live in ease and occupy an easy place without Him.

You say the path is thorny and rough, but as another has said, "Tramp it and you will find that whenever you put your foot upon a thorn, another foot has been there first and taken off the sharpness; and whenever you begin to tramp a rough piece of road in obedience to the divine voice, Another by your side will take the roughness from it and you will simply walk in perfect harmony with Him, who is your perpetual companion in the way of His own marking out."

If your place of service has been a disappointing one, perhaps just here is the reason why: God's methods with man I know are sometimes a bit disturbing, but to move on when God says, "Go," spells progress and power, but to stay where you are because you are satisfied, means arrested development, and ministry dwarfed and impotent.

And it is just as true, brother, that God might wish you to stay on the job where you are. The business man might wish to be a minister and perform a public service that would call the attention of the world to him. The minister might think his work is done in the place where he is, or think that

he could do a greater work if he but had a call to a larger field. But if we could suddenly come to understand that we are just in the place that God would have us be, and are doing just the work that God would have us do, we would welcome the hardships for His sake and none of the trials would move us, and the power of the Holy One of Israel would come upon us.

But to run away when God says, "Stay," is folly, indeed A little poem that Paul Lawrence Dunbar wrote fits in well just here:

"The Lord had a job for me, but I had so much to do,
I said, 'You get somebody else, or wait till I get through!'
I don't know how the Lord came out, but He seemed to get along;
But I felt kind o' sneakin' like, 'cause I know'ed I done Him wrong.
One day I needed the Lord, needed Him myself, needed Him right away;
And He never answered me at all, but I could hear Him say,
Down in my accusin' heart, 'Nigger, I'se got too much to do;
You get somebody else, or wait till I get through.'
Now when the Lord has a job for me, I never tries to shirk;
I drops what I have on hand and does the good Lord's work;
And my affairs can run along, or wait till I get through.
Nobody else can do the job that God's marked out for you."

II.

And now it's time to ask the second question: What are these other vineyards which I am supposed to keep?

1. Well, if you are a minister, it may be just the charge that is yours now. I know a young man, and you know of others, who turned away from a handsome income to preach the gospel. And why did they do it? This young man gave the reason; he said, "I would rather be a preacher and be put in trust with a message that transfigures and transforms as no other power, than to have prominence and wealth and all that it may bring." To think that one might preach a sermon, and by so doing change the current of a human life

that might mean, indirectly, the winning of a whole continent to Christ! And this is your privilege and mine, if we keep faithfully the vineyard.

2. If you are a Sunday-school teacher, it may be that just that is the vineyard where God has placed you. A Sunday-school teacher, passing along the street one day, saw two boys fighting, one of them with his clothes almost torn from his body, and she promised to give him a suit of clothes if he would come to Sunday-school. He came, but on the way home another fight occurred, and the clothing was in a worse condition than before. She gave him three suits of clothes, and then she won his heart, led him to Christ and he became one of the greatest missionaries of his day.

3. If you are a mother in the home, or a father, or any member of the family, that may be God's vineyard for you; and to keep it a place where Christ is honored, and the children are reared in the fear of God and grow up to love Him, this is a sacred duty and an honor higher than which there is none other in all the world. When Charles Wesley comes to judgment, and all the hosts of Methodism whom he has won by song come with him he shall have a throne; and when John Wesley comes to judgment with all the hosts that have been won by sermon, he shall have his reward; but better than either, it seems to me, will be the reward of Susanna Wesley, their mother. She faithfully kept the vineyard of the lives of these two boys; she did what she could, and it is literally true, that wherever the gospel is preached this is spoken of as a memorial of her.

4. It may be just the winning of this life, or that one, and perhaps scores of others, through personal evangelism, that God would have you feel yourself especially called to do, and what holier service could there be than this? Edward Kimball won D. L. Moody, and it was D. L. Moody who shook two continents for Christ.

5. The vineyard for you may be your store or your

office, and these things, too, can be made, and ought to be made, a ministry of God's reconciliation and manifest His glory to the sons of men. And to think of business in any other way is to take from it the dignity and the worth with which God meant it to shine. You will remember that Hiram Golf called himself "a shoemaker by the grace of God," and believed the making of a shoe to be just as holy a thing as the preaching of a sermon. And what great merchant was it who said he was serving God for a business and selling pork to pay expenses?

III.

And yet, if I have not wrongly read the text, it may be possible to keep all these vineyards and fail to keep my own. "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept." And this leads to the other and last question that must be asked, and that is: What is meant by "my own vineyard"? For this vineyard, too, in a very special sense, is God's appointment for me, as your vineyard is for you.

My own vineyard—this, indeed, means my own self, as we saw a while ago,—my life. This is the vineyard which the speaker in the text says had not been kept. And how have I failed to keep it?

1. Perhaps I have not pruned away the superfluous growth—and by this I mean the things of the world, and questionable things in general, which the Christian often allows to encumber his life and hold back his own growth in grace.

Do you remember the story of Sinbad, the sailor? A magnetic rock lifted its head just above the water and silently and powerfully unfastened every clamp and drew every bolt out of the ship's side until it went to pieces and sank beneath the sea. And just so is this world a mighty lodestone athwart the Christian's path. You can give yourself to it, and think

in doing so there is no harm or danger, but out of the life of many a child of God it has drawn every bolt of holy resolution, and unfastened every clamp of holy obligation, and left that life a wreck along the way.

And then, say what we will, the lovely characters of this world, in whose lives the very beauty and gentleness of Jesus have shown with resplendent glory, have not been those whose chief sources of amusement were found in the giddy, venturesome circle of a Christ-ignoring world. Loving this world, the things of God lose their attractiveness; and you cannot come back from the ballroom floor and have a spiritual eye that just as keenly discerns the presence of the Master in your own chamber; you cannot spend the night in the modern playhouse and on retiring find a heart within your breast that is just as sensitive as it ought to be, and perhaps used to be, to the helpful strength issuing from the pages of God's written word; you cannot give yourself to these things and others that could be mentioned, and not find that the place of secret prayer has all the while been closing its doors against you, and that, although you may assume the posture of prayer and say a few things, you really do not pray. "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

2. It may be that I have not nourished my spiritual life as one must fertilize the soil and nourish the growth in keeping a vineyard. How can a child of God expect to retain his spiritual vitality or to renew his strength without realizing through blessed experience what it means to commune with God?

> "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
> The Christian's native air."

And why should we do ourselves this wrong when prayer is ours, and strength and grace and courage are with God? And if your Christian experience has been a dwarfed and disappointing one, and your Christian ministry a powerless

one, much of it, I am sure, is because you have failed just at this point to keep your vineyard.

And then to think that there is such a thing as both the milk and the meat of the Word, and yet that a child of God will let the whole day pass and never feed on a line of this blessed Book, and yet that this same child of God will consume hours of the same day reading a novel! Is that you? Then your own vineyard is not kept, and one day you shall be called to give an account before God. "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

3. And then it may be that we have allowed the little foxes to spoil the vines. There were lions and wolves and bears in Palestine, but all of these together were not so destructive to the vineyard as the little foxes that were so common, and swarmed the fields, burrowed under the ground, gnawed at the roots of the trees, and spoiled the vines, as Solomon says.

Oh, my friends, we must not allow ourselves to be deluded with the thought that there is such a thing as a "little" sin. The least infraction of God's law is a serious matter. The tuberculosis germ is only one ten-thousandth of an inch long, and yet 200,000 people die in the United States every year because of the ravages of this little invisible organism.

I have been told that sometimes an alligator of tremendous proportions is killed by a little bit of an animal that watches its chance and, when the alligator is lying on the river bank sound asleep with its mouth wide open, jumps down its throat. It attacks the vitals of the big creature and then eats a hole through its side and escapes, leaving the alligator dead on the bank. It seems that just this happens sometimes in a life once dedicated to God, but which has allowed something—something that he tried to excuse by a species of subtle sophistry because of his peculiar makeup

and the strong temptation—to creep into his life, and gnaw at his vitals, and feed itself at the expense of his soul, until he is away from God, and dead to the things that are really worth while for the one who once knew God and honored Him with a clean heart, and a clean mind, and a clean life.

Brother, I do not know your life, but if it is spelling failure to-day, I do know that all can be changed, and I know how it may be brought about. I am told that there were two very remarkable watches on exhibition at the St. Louis World's Fair. The one was nearly seventy-five feet in diameter with neat little stairways running through the inside of it, so that people were able to walk around among the moving wheels. The balance wheel weighed a ton, and the hairspring was as thick as a man's wrist. The mainspring was three hundred feet in length, and made of ten steel bands, two inches thick, bound together. The other was the famous Berlin watch, which measured one-fourth of an inch in diameter. its face being about the size of the head of a large-sized tack. This watch weighed less than two grains—Troy weight. It scarcely seems possible that this timepiece of mechanism could keep time with the other watch with its huge machinery; but this was true. And even so the heart of a poor, finite man may be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and then so filled with and regulated by the Holy Spirit that it will beat in perfect unison with the great heart of the infinite God,—keep time with Divinity. And this must be what Christ meant when He said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Oh, my friend, do you want this to be true in your case? Then listen: The Blessed Spirit of Christ, pure, strong, and true, is waiting to come in, and, if you will but have Him do so, He will come in and bring with Him His own health, and you shall no longer be the "servant of sin" of any kind, but, yielding your members unto righteousness, you shall "have your fruit unto holiness."

X.

"TURNED INTO ANOTHER MAN"

"And thou shalt be turned into another man."
—1 Samuel 10:6.

THIS is a remarkable expression. It occurs nowhere else in the Bible.

I shall have very little to say as to what this meant in the experience of Saul, who, at the time this thing came upon him, was certainly *not* a regenerated man. True, it does say in verse 9 that God "gave him another heart." But "another heart" is not necessarily a new heart. The heart, in Hebrews, points more to the intellect and to courage than it does to the conscience and the affections. True, it does say in verse 10 that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him," but that does not necessarily mean in the Old Testament that He came in regenerating and sanctifying grace.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson and wrought in him a supernatural physical strength. He came upon Bezaleel and made him cunning to work in gold and silver and brass. And so in Saul's case what the Spirit of the Lord seems to have done is to have wrought in him a capacity for ruling and leading the people. We say this because in Saul's after-life there was too much evidence of an unchanged heart. He did give evidence of possessing the gift of kingship, but none as to keeping a conscience void of offense toward God and man. And so it was the heart of a statesman, a general, and a prince that the Spirit of the Lord gave to Saul.

However, what I do want to say is that the words of the text make up a very fitting, and, at the same time, a very encouraging expression for what many a regenerated man knows ought to take place in his own experience.

There are those of us here who are not satisfied. The defeats and the humiliating failures of yesterday point with accusing finger in our face, and we stand, as it were, before God, ashamed to look up.

We know there is something better than we have ever attained. There is a peace and a joy and a power that comes from continued victory over sin. But it has not been ours. We hear others sing, and we sing with them:

> "Give me a heart like Thine,
> By Thy wonderful power;
> By Thy grace every hour;
> Give me a heart like Thine."

And yet, because of what has been true of us in other years, in spite of all our efforts to be holy and true, we almost despair of having a heart like the one we sing about and pray for, and an experience like the one we long for.

An illustration may help us. Here was a man who was a minister, and it may be that in his experience some of us may read something of our own. His biggest fight, and, as he says, almost his only one, was with his evil thoughts. He felt that the passionate side of his nature had been unusually strong, and his whole experience had been a hard, determined fight to think on those things that are lovely, and virtuous, and of good report, as Paul says. And there is real heroism in that. He had studied the Word and the experience of others, and he had tried more than once to meet the conditions that seemed to be necessary for an equipment of the Holy Spirit's power that would give him constant and uninterrupted victory. And yet he had to face, from time to time, the humiliating fact that his life was spelling failure and not success in this respect.

Before God he recorded his vows with tears. Victory would come, but it would go again. In the depths of the forest and in the silent hours of the night he made his confession, and begged for power, and made again his vow. He

would write the date of his vow on the fly-leaf of his Bible, only to cross it out at a later time and try again. You know it is said in Milton's exquisite hymn to Purity that a thousand liveried angels lackey the soul that is sincerely pure in heart so that every thought of sin is driven far away; and doubtless there are some of us here who are saying now, even as this man said, "I would give the world to have an experience like that."

This brother's life has not been without victory, and yet he says he does not know at what moment there may come to him, under circumstances the most innocent and unsuspecting, the sudden firing up of his passionate thought, which to him is like the falling down and the breaking up of the whole fabric of his Christian character; and the smile of God seems to go with it.

I know that my own life has not been altogether what it should have been; but I would be untrue to you and to God if I did not say that I know, too, that there is something better for the child of God than what we have just heard.

And so, my brother, this is the message; the same Spirit of God that comes in regenerating grace can come in sanctifying grace, and so empower the life redeemed as to cause it to become radiant with victory, as God ever meant it should be; even as the Spirit of the Lord, in coming upon Saul, changed him from an ass-driver into a king, and empowered him for the mighty work to which he had thus been called.

And yet Saul miserably failed. He was the most highly favored of God in his day, and yet in the face of all that God did for him he blackened the pages of Old Testament history, made a miserable failure out of his kingship and died by his own hand—really, in the sight of God, a murderer.

Now, why did he fail? Why does anyone fail in what God would have him be and do? Do you remember what the Lord said to Cain? "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." I wonder if this little word which we spell with

only three letters—this word which has in it, when you pronounce it, the hiss of the serpent (s-i-n)—is not the secret of it all. It was this thing, at any rate, that caused Saul to lose the favor of God. And in the last analysis that sin, although it showed itself in more ways than one, took one form that became responsible for it all. And I don't think I am going to make any mistake when I say that Saul's trouble came from the self-same spirit that causes most of our own.

It is true that Saul got jealous of David, and that is an awful thing. It aroused all the hatred in his soul to see David honored and preferred above himself.

And then it is true that he had murder in his heart, for he sought the life of the Lord's anointed, and would have killed him in cold blood if opportunity had come his way.

And then it is true that he disobeyed God because of his vanity and his greed, and to this he added the sin of hypocrisy by pretending that the offense in sparing Agag and the best of his flocks was an act of piety.

But, back of all this is the fact that Saul was a self-willed man. At the heart and root of his nature lay the subtle intention to have his own way rather than the way he knew was assigned to him in the decrees of the Most High. Oh, my brother, who does not see what a fearful thing it is to deliberately set aside the will of God—to turn aside from God and His ways, and give one's self up to the self-seeking impulses of one's own heart?

The real test is a changed will—a will that yields up everything to the will of God. And, in the light of this, if our own experiences have very largely spelled failure, ought we not to examine ourselves? The question to be determined by your life and mine is, whether God is the King, or you; whether God, or myself.

We were talking of sin a moment ago. What is the middle letter of that hissing word? It is the letter "I." It was

when Adam put that letter in the center of his life that he fell. And it is this thing that is the curse of our life, whether before regeneration or after. Before regeneration it dresses in rags; after regeneration it becomes respectable and puts on a white garment, but this matters nothing to the Devil, so long as it is in us and dominates us. That "I" must give place to "Not I." Dr. F. B. Meyer said that one time when he was in Germany they gave him a beautiful card on which were printed two words, "Ich" and "Er"—"I" and "He"; then the "I" was crossed out with a stroke, leaving only "He." And this must be true of you and me.

I remember, not so many years ago, how a young minister came to me at a Bible conference in a Western state. He said, "You do not know me but I owe much to you." And then he told me how disappointing his early ministry had been. He said, "I was ambitious, but I didn't seem to succeed. My charge was a small one, and I thought it ought to be larger, and I had a rebellious spirit. My work was done in a perfunctory sort of way—no conversions and no power in my message. And then I commenced to lose the victory in my own life, and I became discouraged, and said, 'I will quit.' I said, 'I will go into the insurance business.' It was in this condition that I came to Winona and it was out on the Indian Mound where I heard you speak on the life of surrender. I thought I would die on that hillside, but I said, 'O God, if you will do for what that man says you will, I will pay the price, let the cost be what it may.' I said, 'O God, I will go anywhere; I will preach in any church, however small, and by Thy grace I will do Thy will, whatever that will may be.' And there came a peace into my soul I think I had never known before. Just how God worked in making me over again I do not know, but things are different now; the days of defeat are gone. I went back to my little church and I enjoyed my preaching there. Souls were saved, and now God has led me into a larger charge." He said,

"I felt I must tell you about it and ask you to thank God with me."

"And thou shalt be turned into another man." This is what God had done for him; and this, I believe, my brother, God can do for you and for me; and there are doubtless some of us here to-day who need an experience like that in our lives. Like the Galatians, some of us, "having begun in the Spirit," have been trying to "perfect ourselves in the flesh." And so, in closing, may we not try to mark out very simply the way to restoration.

Paul made it very plain to the Galatians as to what they had to do, and I am not inclined to think the conditions have changed in your day and mine. Sin is ever the same ugly thing; the flesh is hopelessly impotent, as ever; God's grace is as rich and free, and the Holy Spirit as ready and, thank God, as omnipotent as when Paul told the Galatians their only hope was in coming back from all religious effort in their own strength, and yielding themselves absolutely to Him in whom they had first begun.

Just three steps are necessary.

First. *Confession.* Do you remember when it was that Peter was delivered? Well, the change began when Peter began to weep; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. Before God can come in an unusual way into your life or mine there must be a setting right of things which are not as they should be. If we do not have a conscience void of offense we cannot have God's best.

I think of Augustine and the woman who had fascinated him almost to damnation. Between this woman and his saintly mother, Monica, Augustine was swept back and forth, now to the very depths of the abyss and then back again heavenward, under the hallowed attraction of his saintly mother. You may remember the story, as he tells it, of how he sat one day in the garden and saw a copy of the New Testament which Monica had left upon the garden seat, and

a voice seemed to say in audible tone, "Take and read." He opened the Book and surely it was the Holy Spirit who directed him to the thirteenth chapter of Romans. You know that remarkable chapter. And as he read there came the mighty struggle that was cut short in glorious victory. He counted the cost and made his decision. He told Monica, his mother, and Monica was glad. The next day on the streets of Carthage he saw the beautiful woman who had been the curse of his life and he started to run. She cried after him, "Augustine, why do you run? It is I." And he said, "I run because I am not I." He was no longer the old Augustine she had known in sin, for the Spirit of the Lord had come upon him and he had been turned into another man.

But I hear someone say, "It is just this thing—just this victory—that I have not been able to achieve." Then listen a little further.

The second step is *Surrender*—an absolute putting of the will of God in place of your own. One must so absolutely consider himself to be the property of God as to have no voice, nor desire any, in the disposition of that which belongs to God.

They tell us the story of the French who, under Napoleon, invaded Russia at the beginning of the last century and came to a small village where all had fled but one—a woodman, it seemed he was, judging from the axe in his belt.

"And who are you?" said the French officer.

"I, sir," said the woodman, "am a loyal subject of the Czar."

The officer ordered him to be shot; but he said, "Sir, so you think I am afraid to die?" and he looked cooly down the gun barrels and never flinched, as the soldiers were waiting the word to fire. The officer was so struck by the courage of the man that he said:

"We will not kill him, but we will brand him; we will put a mark upon him." And they pressed a red hot branding

iron into the palm of his left hand. When it was done and the woodman saw the mark it had left, he said, "And what does it mean?"

"That," the officer said, "is the letter 'N.' It stands for Napoleon; you belong to him now."

But the woodman turned, placed his left hand on the solid stump of a tree, and with his right he drew the axe from his belt, and with one stroke he severed the branded hand from his arm. And as he did it he cried, "There is not one bit of me, sir, that does not belong to the Czar."

Like that must be our devotion and our surrender to God, and then His will, wherever it takes us and whatever it means, will be to us the sweetest thing we know.

The third step is *Faith.* Let us reckon the Holy Spirit true to His word. It was faith that brought forgiveness and every other spiritual gift, and without faith it is not to be expected that God can do anything at all in our behalf. It is the Holy Spirit in the fullness of His power that we need. Having met the other conditions, it remains for us now to believe, not alone that God *can* fill us with His Spirit, not alone that He *will* do this for us, but that He *does* do it, and then go forth not to *talk* about it, but to *live* it as an accomplished thing in our experience. And, as we thus go, this thing for which we seek will break in upon us as a mighty living reality.

"And thou shalt be turned into another man." Let God do that for you to-day—here on this hill-top, sanctified by its marvelous memories of other days.

And now just a note of warning. Certainly this does not mean no further temptation—no further need of special baptisms of the Holy Spirit to overcome and achieve. I hardly think that we are warranted to look for an experience like that. But, thank God, when we have met the other conditions, His Power is always at hand.

The Duke of Wellington one time ordered a young officer to take a most destructive battery that crowned the hill-top. It was an appalling thing to do—almost beyond the possible. The Duke said, "Can you do it?" And the young officer replied, "I can, sir, I think, if you will give me one grasp of your all-conquering hand as I go."

And so, my brother, there is One standing by you with His mighty arm made bare, and His is a stretched-out hand for you and me to clasp. And all these things being so, I shall not despair, but I shall go on from victory unto victory, and from grace unto grace, until He shall have perfected His will in me.

At a certain place in the Alps there is a monument to a guide who perished when attempting to make the steep ascent of the mountain. The simple inscription on the stone is "He Died Climbing." It is a noble tribute to a heroic man. His face was forward. He expired toiling upward in the path of duty. He died climbing. What a suggestion for the close of a sermon like this!

My sainted and glorified friend, S. H. Hadley, used to say to me, "If I don't succeed in the way of holiness I am going to die in the attempt." And so, my brother, by His wonderful power, by His grace every hour, I am going on.

Jehovah said to Jacob, "I am El Shaddai"—God Almighty—the all-sufficient, omnipotent God. And this Jehovah is my God, and through Him I can do all things.

"And thou shalt be turned into another man." May God grant this experience to you and me!

XI

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."—Ephesians 4:30.

WHAT a wonderful Epistle this one of Paul's to the Ephesians really is! My own heart always takes a bound as I pass from the one just before it, so impassioned and so full of controversy, to this one so unimpassioned, and so exalted. It is like coming, as some one has said, from the battlefield into the very hush and stillness of the temple.

As I have read it over and over I have found myself saying, "If there is a sweeter or more helpful letter anywhere among the inspired Epistles I do not know which one it is."

This letter of Paul to the Ephesians tells me of my redemption when it was but a silent thought in the mind of God; tells me of its glorious consummation in the far-away hereafter; and if I would accomplish the will of God on my way through this life he sets before me here the marvelous possibility of "being strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" to do it.

This is the Epistle that speaks so often of the "heavenly places," but before it closes the Apostle turns to deal with the more practical affairs of human life and relationships. It begins in heaven," as some one has said, "and ends in the kitchen."

Its last chapters are packed with practical suggestions concerning purity of life, false witnessing, and proper relationships in the home. And right in the midst of these we find this most serious and affectionate exhortation of the text, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, with whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption." As if we could grieve Him with the improper use of our lips, and by wrong relationships in our home: and this, of course, is true.

There are three things that lie almost on the very surface of this text of Scripture.

1. It shows us that the Holy Spirit is a Person. If that were not so He could not be grieved. Some people think the Holy Spirit is just an influence from God, some sort of an impersonal force or energy of the Almighty. But you cannot grieve an influence; you cannot grieve an impersonal force. It takes some one with a heart to be grieved.

And listen; we need to appreciate this fact more than we do, and it is only when we do appreciate it that we will come to appreciate Him in the way we should. And when He is so appreciated you will find it exceedingly painful to hear others speaking of this blessed Personality as "it." How inconsiderate, to say the least! and how painful it must be to the sensitive nature of the Holy Spirit Himself! You would not appreciate being called an "it" yourself.

2. In the next place, the Holy Spirit is a Person who loves the child of God.

I wonder how long it has been since your pastor preached a sermon on "The Love of the Holy Spirit"? We hear all too little about it. God loved us enough to give His Son, and the Son loved us enough to give Himself, but the Holy Spirit loved us enough to apply, and to work out in us, the redemption the love of the Father and the Son made possible, and His love must be great, indeed, to deal as patiently, and with such forbearance, as He has been compelled to deal with most of us; in fact, with the best of us.

How do we know He loves us? How could it be otherwise if what we have just said is true? But we know it because the Word says so, and if we had no other verse than the one before us, how very plain it is made in this one. Because, if He did not love you, you could not grieve Him.

If you had an enemy you could not grieve him. You could not grieve anyone who is indifferent to you. He doesn't care. But you might grieve your mother, because your mother loves you. And the measure of her grief when you wound her you can always take as the measure of her love. The deeper the love the profounder the grief. And something of the Holy Spirit's love for you and me may be measured by this, that the word used for *grief* here is the very same word used to express the awful grief and sorrow and agony of the Saviour in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Oh, how He loves! Think of it! Such infinite sorrow in the heart of this Divine Lover because of the thoughtlessness, and the worldliness, and the sin of those who have been sealed by Him unto the day of redemption! No wonder some have sought to find in the Holy Spirit the mother-part of Divine Love.

3. And then, in the next place, He is a Person to whose agency we are indebted for the most unspeakable gift it is possible for us to know. It is *with Him,* we are told, or rather *in Him,* as the Revised Version puts it, that we have been sealed unto the day of redemption.

Paul is working upon the Ephesians through love and not through fear. It is not because the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God is coming that we are urged not to grieve the Holy Spirit, but it is because, through His great love, we are so much indebted to Him.

No one but a child of God can grieve the Holy Spirit; and this is the sad thing about it. Others may *resist* Him or *quench* Him, but only the Christian can grieve Him.

Every Christian is sealed with the Holy Spirit, and the seal is the sign of security; made secure unto the day of redemption. If you are a child of God it is not proper for you to pray for the sealing of the Holy Spirit. The Revised Version has rightly changed the tense of the verb from the present to the past: "Ye *were* sealed," and that sealing took place at your conversion in the moment of your regeneration. This is the Person concerning whom Paul says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

How do we grieve Him? Whenever we set Him aside; whenever we pull away from Him; whenever we smother His voice; whenever we sin in any way, His sensitive heart is made sorrowful. But I want just now to call your attention more especially to three ways in which this grief is brought about. They all begin with the same letter and the same sound. This may help you to remember them.

We grieve the Holy Spirit by:

1. Disregarding His presence within us.
2. Distrusting His Word about us.
3. Disobeying His counsel to us.

1. By disregarding His presence within us. By that I mean giving Him an unclean place in which to dwell. At the moment of our regeneration He becomes our guest, indwelling and abiding with us forever. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" That's a verse every Christian should memorize and ponder over.

Now, suppose an aged mother were dwelling with her son, and he should so disregard her presence as to make no provision for her comfort, and let her live without one token of gratitude for what she has meant to him. Yes, more; suppose he made that home the scene of deep offense to her, and brought into it unholy companions in whose presence he allowed her to be ridiculed and insulted! There are no words in language severe enough to characterize a disposition like

that, but do you know what I think? I think you might better so treat the one who gave you your first birth than to be born a second time of the Holy Spirit of God, and then be so utterly unmindful of His presence and feeling as to poison the atmosphere of His temple with unholy thoughts, and to fill the place of His abiding with that which is repulsive and unclean, which His eyes must behold and His heart endure, though it throb with unspeakable grief all the while.

"The Spirit of God dwelleth within you." Have you ever seriously considered what that means? It means, of course, that you can go nowhere without taking Him with you.

I have heard of a young man who was asked to go to a questionable place and he replied that he could not go because he had a friend who loved him and whom he loved very much in return, and who would not want to go with him.

And said the young man, "I cannot go without Him."

His companions said, "Come, let us meet him, and we will ask him to go."

"But, it's no use," said the young man, "He will not want to go."

And they said, "Who is he?"

And with all the dignity of his heroic manliness he answered, "My friend is Jesus Christ."

That is true. Christ would not want to be found in many a place where those who bear His name sometimes go. But Paul says, "Christ liveth in me," and that indwelling is through His Spirit, which is the Holy Spirit, and in a very certain sense where we go He must go, and I wonder how many of us, under the same circumstances, would have declined to enter where we felt He would not wish to accompany us.

But His indwelling means more. It means that He hears all we say, sees all we do, and is conscious of our every thought. God pity us if we do not care.

They tell us the story of King Menzentius, who was driven out by his own people because of his detestable cruelty. He was a stranger to mercy, and no torture which his cruel heart could invent was too horrible to gratify his vengeance. One of his methods of punishment was to fasten the living to the dead, hand in hand, face to face, and lip to lip, and thus leave the wretched victim to die in this terrible and disgusting embrace. Virgil gives an interesting account of this horrible practice in his Æneid, and by many it is thought that here Paul got his figure of speech when he cried, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Whether this be so or not, what a striking illustration it is of the thing Paul had in mind. He was crying for deliverance from sin, from the impure and unholy passions and appetites which use this body, with its weakness and its lust, as the instrument of their activity, and so bring us under the power of death.

And what a picture it is of the real nature of sin, foul, offensive, and polluting. It may not appear so at first to the sinner who loves his sin, but to the one who has found the way and experienced the delights of a holy life in Christ the cry of Paul comes with telling significance.

And if sin can thus appear to a mortal like Paul, and like you and me, how must it appear in the eyes of Him in whose sight the very heavens are unclean?

It would not be pleasant and it ought not to be necessary for me to dilate on the unholy things which God's own people often tolerate to their own hurt and the Spirit's grief. If they cared to know and would listen they might hear His voice telling them where to go, and what to avoid, but it's hardly worth His while to speak if there isn't any disposition to obey when His voice is heard.

You may have a Christian heart and yet not have a clean heart, though it would be a very poor Christian heart, to be sure. It may not be possible for me to be great, but it is

possible for me to be holy if I really want to be. Listen again, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" and if only I want to be holy it will please Him not only to indwell with His presence but to infill with His power until my life shall no longer be a disappointment to Him and a source of constant grief, but one in which, thank God, even He, the Holy Spirit, will delight.

2. I said we grieve Him also by distrusting His Word about us.

What about the assurance of your salvation? Why are you always in doubt about it?

When Chapman told Moody his trouble along this line, Moody said to him with characteristic bluntness, "Whom are you doubting?" And Dr. Chapman saw that he was doubting God, and from that day the good Doctor said he stopped this unintentional sin.

Dear friend, it's yours to know that you are a child of God. "These things have I written," says John, "that ye may know that ye have eternal life." And what are some of the things that are written?

Well, here are some of them: "And this is the record that God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son." John wrote that. Then, here are the words of Jesus Himself, "He that believeth on Him that sent me hath everlasting life, and is passed"—not going to pass merely when you die, but *is* passed—"from death unto life."

There never was a time when a Christian had any right to sing,

> "'Tis a point I long to know,
> Oft it causes anxious thought;
> Do I love the Lord or no?
> Am I His, or am I not?"

I know it is all right with me at this point, not because I am any better than you, but because "I know whom I have

believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

My dear child, it is not a question as to how you feel about it. An ounce of faith is worth a ton of that sort of stuff.

> "Believe, and the feeling may come or may go;
> Believe in the Word that was written to show
> That all who believe their salvation may know;
> Believe, and keep right on believing."

"Ah," said an old Scotch woman to her persecutors who threatened her with the loss of everything if she did not renounce her faith, "you may take my property; you may take my husband; you may take my child; you may take my life; but you canna take my Christ." Isn't that great? Isn't that wondrously fine? But, oh, how it must grieve Him to have us always doubting His Word and mistrusting His love when we ought to be giving ourselves to doing His will. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

You know we are told in Romans 8:16 that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if that witness with your spirit is not as deep as it might be, I am sure you will find the reason in the shallowness of your whole Christian life and experience.

The Bible, you know, is the Holy Spirit's Word, and this Word is the great instrument in all His operations; and if He has not worked in your heart a strong faith in this Word I wonder if it is not because your heart is not altogether right in the sight of God. Wilful sinning will dampen anyone's assurance. I wouldn't give a fig for it if it didn't.

And then here is something very much akin to what we have been saying: it is our distrust of His Word about our final inheritance.

A pastor once said to me, "I wish you would come with me to the bedside of an old saint; her case is a very peculiar one." We entered and I said to her:

"Well, mother, you have some sweet experiences waiting for you very soon."

And she whispered and said, "Do you really think it is all true?"

And I said, "Certainly, mother, we have His Word for all that."

"Oh," she said, "if I was only sure it would be so easy to go."

And I helped her as best I could, going from promise to promise throughout His Word, and then after prayer we left, and as we passed out the pastor said to me:

"Just that I have done each time I have called, but each time I return I find her doubting and trembling lest after all death would be the end."

Not willing to trust His Word! Oh, how it grieves Him!

The Bible is crammed full of promises for the life to come. There are some men—millions of them—who can lay a little piece of paper on a bank counter with nothing back of it but a human promise to pay and it will instantly turn to gold; and yet here we are, some of us, fearful that the promises given to us through the Holy Spirit of the Mighty God will not produce their face value in the life to come.

I read of a man who began to crawl over a frozen river on his hands and knees, fearful lest the ice would not bear his weight, and while he was yet a great way from the farther shore a man drove past him with a big sled filled with pig iron. And some of us are like that with the promises of God; we seem to be afraid lest they will break down under the strain of any faith we might place upon them. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." The seal is the sign of security, and God knows His own.

3. And then there is a third way, we said, by which we grieve the Holy Spirit, and that is by disobeying His counsel or His command to us.

Friends, isn't it about time that some of us stop singing, "I'll go where you want me to go, and I'll be what you want me to be," and begin to walk in that way somewhat, and to be something of what His grace and His power has made it possible to become?

Oh, how often He has given to you and me some new vision of Christ that has called for increased devotion and deeper consecration, and just because the way of consecration and devotion has always been the way of the Altar and the Cross we have shrunk back, and His tender, sensitive heart has been grieved.

The story is told of a young lady of a fashionable home who had given her heart to Christ, and was a most earnest Christian. She was always speaking to others about Christ, and refrained from everything that might bring the sincerity of her profession into question. She was bitterly opposed in her own home, and her earnest life brought her no little embarrassment, and once when she was repulsed and wounded Satan whispered to her that possibly she was a bit too conscientious, and that it would be just as well if she were a bit more like the average Christian.

Just then came an invitation to spend the holidays with the guests of a friend among whom she was not very well known, and so she made up her mind not to speak openly to any of them about Christ and not to put herself in the way of being known as especially religious.

She carried out her purpose, but not without considerable pain to herself, and the visit closed. But, on the day of her leaving, a very fashionable society lady was walking with her alone when suddenly the lady said:

"Where is your sister? Why did she not come? I mean your religious sister, the one who is sometimes called 'the religious Miss J.' It was because I heard that she was to be here that I accepted the invitation. I am so tired of the vain, and empty, and unsatisfying life I am leading that I just

longed to have a talk with a real Christian. Why did your sister not come?"

And it was then that the poor, unhappy girl burst into tears and with shame was obliged to confess that she had no sister, and that she was the one who had sometimes been called "the religious Miss J.," but that she had been ashamed of Christ and of the badge she should so proudly have worn for Him. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

But do you know, my friend, there is a life that always honors God, and always glorifies Christ, and will never bring us to a place of shame like that. It is the Spirit-filled life.

Paul said, "Be not drunken with wine, but be filled with the Spirit." It is just as much of a command to "be filled with the Spirit," as it is "not to be drunk with wine." And if you should ask me what the "filling of the Spirit" means, in a word it is the yielding of myself so completely to the already indwelling Spirit of God that He may have His way altogether with me. And it is this, and this only, that can cause us to walk and not stumble, and in all things to be well-pleasing to Him. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, with whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption."

And if I do grieve Him, what then?

Well, if in a moment of temptation my feet have slipped, and I have gone down, Christ will lift me up, and His forgiveness will be mine.

But if I trifle with sin, if I persist in self-indulgence, and "do always resist the Holy Spirit," it means shame and defeat and failure all along the way—no peace of mind, the lashing whips of a guilty conscience, and, in the end, being saved possibly as if by fire.

A man waited for me at the close of a meeting. He stood midway in the room, and as I came near I saw the blood rush from his fingers as he almost drove them into the seat before him. I said:

"Well, my friend, what is it?"

And looking into my face he said, "Lost!"

And before I could reply he said, "I used to know God but I've lost Him altogether out of my life."

And I said, "Well, sir, you know the reason why."

And looking still more intently into my face he leaned forward and said, "Sin! sin!"

I could hear the hiss of the serpent in the word. I am not going to tell you his story, but it is pitiful in the extreme. He had been a minister of the Gospel, but he had so incessantly, so continuously grieved the Holy Spirit by persisting in sin—in something that was grossly questionable, to say the least, and he had so long continued in his sin that God could not use him any more. And God stripped him of his power, took the influence of His Holy Spirit from him, removed him from the place where he had set his feet, and reserved his crown for service for some one more worthy to wear it. May heaven spare you, and may heaven spare me, from ever coming to a place like that!

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "I keep under . . . my body, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." I know what some people say that means. I know also that no man knows absolutely what it altogether does mean. And I also know what I very much fear it means: The word is "adokimos," a castaway."

But put, if you please, the easiest interpretation upon it, and when you have done it, may heaven spare you and me an experience like that; in a place where God will have no further use for us because we have become ambitious for ourselves and not for Christ; because we have so long refused to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and have so long indulged ourselves at a point where God has said, "Thou shalt not," until God must strip us of our power, and leave us to drag our impoverished lives out to their disappointing end, and then go up, saved as if by fire, when we might have

had an abundant entrance because of what the Holy Spirit of God would have done for us if we had only been yielded to Him.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And may the indwelling Holy Spirit help us now.

> "Lord, for to-morrow and its needs I do not pray;
> Keep me, my God, from stain of sin, just for to-day."

And may we have the grace to say, be it by water or by fire,

> "So wash me, Thou, without, within,
> Or purge with fire, if that must be;
> No matter how, if only by sin
> Die out in me, die out in me."

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